



Short Stories II. from the
Harmsworth-London
Magazine by Mrs. L. T.
Meade & Robert Eustace

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Short Stories II. by Mrs. L. T. Meade & Robert Eustace
The Harmsworth-London Magazine Volumes 2 to 10

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MR. BOVEY'S UNEXPECTED WILL.

BY L. T. MEADE AND ROBERT EUSTACE.

Illustrated by Ernest Prater.

AMONGST all my patients there were none who excited my sense of curiosity like Miss Florence Cusack. I never thought of her without a sense of baffled inquiry taking possession of me, and I never visited her without the hope that some day I should get to the bottom of the mystery which surrounded her.

Miss Cusack was a young and handsome woman. She possessed to all appearance superabundant health, her energies were extraordinary, and her life completely out of the common. She lived alone in a large house in Kensington Court Gardens, kept a good staff of servants, and went much into society. Her beauty, her sprightliness, her wealth, and, above all, her extraordinary life, caused her to be much talked about. As one glanced at this handsome girl with her slender figure, her eyes of the darkest blue, her raven black hair and clear complexion, it was almost impossible to believe that she was a power in the police courts, and highly respected by every detective in Scotland Yard.

I shall never forget my first visit to Miss Cusack. I had been asked by a brother doctor to see her in his absence. Strong as she was, she was subject to periodical and very acute nervous attacks. When I entered her house she came up to me eagerly.

"Pray do not ask me too many questions or look too curious, Dr. Lonsdale," she said; "I know well that my whole condition is abnormal; but, believe me, I am forced to do what I do."

"What is that?" I inquired.

"You see before you," she continued, with emphasis, "the most acute and, I believe, successful lady detective in the whole of London."

"Why do you lead such an extraordinary life?" I asked.

"To me the life is fraught with the very deepest interest," she answered. "In any case," and now the colour faded from her cheeks, and her eyes grew full of emotion, "I have no choice; I am under a promise, which I must fulfil. There are times, however, when I need help—such help as you, for instance, can give me. I have never seen you before, but I like your face. If



"THE BALL IS HOT!" EXCLAIMED THE INSPECTOR."

the time should ever come, will you give me your assistance?"

I asked her a few more questions, and finally agreed to do what she wished.

From that hour Miss Cusack and I became the staunchest friends. She constantly invited me to her house, introduced me to her friends, and gave me her confidence to a marvellous extent.

On my first visit I noticed in her study two enormous brazen bulldogs. They were splendidly cast, and made a striking feature in the arrangements of the room; but I did not pay them any special attention until she happened to mention that there was a story, and a strange one, in connection with them.

"But for these dogs," she said, "and the mystery attached to them, I should not be the woman I am, nor would my life be set apart for the performance of duties at once herculean and ghastly."

When she said these words her face once more turned pale, and her eyes flashed with an ominous fire.

On a certain afternoon in November 1894, I received a telegram from Miss Cusack, asking me to put aside all other work and go to her at once. Handing my patients over to the care of my partner, I started for her house. I found her in her study and alone. She came up to me holding a newspaper in her hand.

"Do you see this?" she asked. As she spoke she pointed to the agony column. The following words met my eyes:—

SEND more sand and charcoal dust. Core and mould ready for casting.—JOSHUA LINKLATER.

I read these curious words twice, then glanced at the eager face of the young girl.

"I have been waiting for this," she said, in a tone of triumph.

"But what can it mean?" I said. "Core and mould



"MISS CUSACK CAME UP TO ME EAGERLY."

ready for casting?" She folded up the paper, and laid it deliberately on the table.

"I thought that Joshua Linklater would say something of the kind," she continued. "I have been watching for a similar advertisement in all the dailies for the last three weeks. This may be of the utmost importance."

"Will you explain?" I said.

"I may never have to explain, or, on the other hand, I may," she answered. "I have not really sent for you to point out this advertisement, but in connection with another matter. Now, pray, come into the next room with me."

She led me into a prettily and luxuriously furnished boudoir on the same floor. Standing by the hearth was a slender fair-haired girl, looking very little more than a child.

"May I introduce you to my cousin, Letitia Ransom?" said Miss Cusack, eagerly. "Pray sit down, Letty," she continued, addressing the girl with a certain asperity, "Dr. Lonsdale is the man of all others we want. Now, doctor, will you

give me your very best attention, for I have an extraordinary story to relate."

At Miss Cusack's words Miss Ransom immediately seated herself. Miss Cusack favoured her with a quick glance, and then once more turned to me.

"You are much interested in queer mental phases, are you not?" she said.

"I certainly am," I replied.

"Well, I should like to ask your opinion with regard to such a will as this."

Once again she unfolded a newspaper, and, pointing to a paragraph, handed it to me. I read as follows:—

EXTRAORDINARY TERMS OF A MISER'S WILL.

Mr. Henry Bovey, who died last week at a small house at Kew, has left one of the most extraordinary wills on record. During his life his eccentricities and miserly habits were well known, but this eclipses them all, by the surprising method in which he has disposed of his property.

Mr. Bovey was unmarried, and, as far as can be proved, has no near relations in the world. The small balance at his banker's is to be used for defraying fees, duties, and sundry charges, also any existing debts, but the main bulk of his securities were recently realised, and the money in sovereigns is locked in a safe in his house.

A clause in the will states that there are three claimants to this property, and that the one whose net bodily weight is nearest to the weight of these sovereigns is to become the legatee. The safe containing the property is not to be opened till the three claimants are present; the competition is then to take place, and the winner is at once to remove his fortune.

Considerable excitement has been manifested over the affair, the amount of the fortune being unknown. The date of the competition is also kept a close secret for obvious reasons.

"Well," I said, laying the paper down, "whoever this Mr. Bovey was, there is little doubt that he must have been out of his mind. I never heard of a more crazy idea."

"Nevertheless it is to be carried out," replied Miss Cusack. "Now listen, please, Dr. Lonsdale. This paper is a fortnight old. It is now three weeks since the death of Mr. Bovey, his will has been proved, and the time has come for the carrying out of the competition. I happen to know two of the claimants well, and intend to be present at the ceremony."

I did not make any answer, and after a pause she continued—

"One of the gentlemen who is to be

weighed against his own fortune is Edgar Wimburne. He is engaged to my cousin Letitia. If he turns out to be the successful claimant there is nothing to prevent their marrying at once; if otherwise—" here she turned and looked full at Miss Ransom, who stood up, the colour coming and going in her cheeks—"if otherwise, Mr. Campbell Graham has to be dealt with."

"Who is he?" I asked.

"Another claimant, a much older man than Edgar. Nay, I must tell you everything. He is a claimant in a double sense, being also a lover, and a very ardent one, of Letitia's.

"Lettie must be saved," she said, looking at me, "and I believe I know how to do it."

"You spoke of three claimants," I interrupted; "who is the third?"

"Oh, he scarcely counts, unless indeed he carries off the prize. He is William Tyndall, Mr. Bovey's servant and retainer."

"And when, may I ask, is this momentous competition to take place?" I continued.

"To-morrow morning at half-past nine, at Mr. Bovey's house. Will you come with us to-morrow, Dr. Lonsdale, and be present at the weighing?"

"I certainly will," I answered, "it will be a novel experience."

"Very well; can you be at this house a little before half-past eight, and we will drive straight to Kew?"

I promised to do so, and soon after took my leave. The next day I was at Miss Cusack's house in good time. I found waiting for me Miss Cusack herself, Miss Ransom, and Edgar Wimburne.

A moment or two later we all found ourselves seated in a large landau, and in less than an hour had reached our destination. We drew up at a small dilapidated-looking house, standing in a row of prim suburban

villas, and found that Mr. Graham, the lawyer, and the executors had already arrived.

The room into which we had been ushered was fitted up as a sort of study. The furniture was very poor and scanty, the carpet was old, and the only ornaments on the walls were a few tattered prints yellow with age.

As soon as ever we came in, Mr. Southby, the lawyer, came forward and spoke.

"We are met here to-day," he said, "as you are all of course aware, to carry out the clause of Mr. Bovey's last will and testament. What reasons prompted him to make these extraordinary conditions we do not know; we only know that we are bound to carry them out. In a safe in his bedroom there is, according to his own statement, a large sum of money in gold, which is to be the property of the one of these three gentlemen whose weight shall nearest approach to the weight of the gold. Messrs. Hutchinson and Co. have been kind enough to supply one of their latest weighing machines, which has been carefully checked, and now if you three gentlemen will kindly come with me into the next room we will begin the business at once. Perhaps you, Dr. Lonsdale, as a



"I READ AS FOLLOWS:—
EXTRAORDINARY TERMS
OF A
MISER'S WILL."

medical man, will be kind enough to accompany us."

Leaving Miss Cusack and Miss Ransom, we then went into the old man's bedroom,

where the three claimants undressed and were carefully weighed. I append their respective weights, which I noted down:—

Graham - - - 13 stone 9 lbs. 6 oz.

Tyndall - - - 11 stone 6 lbs. 3 oz.

Wimburne - - 12 stone 11 lbs.

Having resumed their attire, Miss Cusack and Miss Ransom were summoned, and the lawyer, drawing out a bunch of keys, went across to a large iron safe which had been built into the wall.

We all pressed round him, every one anxious to get the first glimpse of the old man's hoard. The lawyer turned the key, shot back the lock, and flung open the heavy doors. We found that the safe was literally packed with small canvas bags—indeed, so full was it that as the doors swung open two of the bags fell to the floor with a heavy crunching noise. Mr. Southby lifted them up, and then cutting the strings of one, opened it. It was full of bright sovereigns.

An exclamation burst from us all. If all those bags contained gold there was a fine fortune awaiting the successful candidate! The business was now begun in earnest. The lawyer rapidly extracted bag after bag, untied the string, and shot the contents with a crash into the great copper scale pan, while the attendant kept adding weights to the other side to balance it, calling out the amounts as he did so. No one spoke, but our eyes were fixed as if by some strange fascination on the pile of yellow metal that rose higher and higher each moment.

As the weight reached one hundred and fifty pounds, I heard the old servant behind me utter a smothered oath. I turned and glanced at him; he was staring at the gold with a fierce expression of disappointment and avarice. He at any rate was out of the reckoning, as at eleven stone six, or one hundred and sixty pounds, he could be nowhere near the weight of the sovereigns, there being still eight more bags to untie.

The competition, therefore, now lay between Wimburne and Graham. The latter's face bore strong marks of the agitation which consumed him: the veins stood out like cords on his forehead, and his lips trembled. It would evidently be a near thing, and the suspense was almost intolerable. The lawyer continued to deliberately add to the pile. As the last bag was shot into the scale, the attendant put four ten-pound weights into the other side.

It was too much. The gold rose at once. He took one off, and then the two great pans swayed slowly up and down, finally coming to a dead stop.

"Exactly one hundred and eighty pounds, gentlemen," he cried, and a shout went up from us all. Wimburne at twelve stone eleven, or one hundred and seventy-nine pounds, had won.

I turned and shook him by the hand.

"I congratulate you most heartily," I cried. "Now let us calculate the amount of your fortune."

I took a piece of paper from my pocket and made a rough calculation. Taking £56 to the pound avoirdupois, there were at least ten thousand and eighty sovereigns in the scale before us.

"I can hardly believe it," cried Miss Ransom.

I saw her gazing down at the gold, then she looked up into her lover's face.

"Is it true?" she said, panting as she spoke.

"Yes, it is true," he answered. Then he dropped his voice. "It removes all difficulties," I heard him whisper to her.

Her eyes filled with tears, and she turned aside to conceal her emotion.

"There is no doubt whatever as to your ownership of this money, Mr. Wimburne," said the lawyer, "and now the next thing is to ensure its safe transport to the bank."

As soon as the amount of the gold had been made known, Graham, without bidding good-bye to anyone, abruptly left the room, and I assisted the rest of the men in shovelling the sovereigns into a stout canvas bag, which we then lifted and placed in a four-wheeled cab which had arrived for the purpose of conveying the gold to the city.

"Surely someone is going to accompany Mr. Wimburne?" said Miss Cusack at this juncture. "My dear Edgar," she continued, "you are not going to be so mad as to go alone?"

To my surprise, Wimburne coloured, and then gave a laugh of annoyance.

"What could possibly happen to me?" he said. "Nobody knows that I am carrying practically my own weight in gold into the city."

"If Mr. Wimburne wishes I will go with him," said Tyndall, now coming forward. The old man had to all appearance got over his disappointment, and spoke eagerly.

"The thing is fair and square," he

added. "I am sorry I did not win, but I'd rather you had it, sir, than Mr. Graham. Yes, that I would, and I congratulate you, sir."

"Thank you, Tyndall," replied Wimburne, "and if you like to come with me I shall be very glad of your company."

The bag of sovereigns being placed in the cab, Wimburne bade us all a hasty good-bye, told Miss Ransom that he would call to see her at Miss Cusack's house that evening, and, accompanied by Tyndall, started off. As we watched the cab turn the corner I heard Miss Ransom utter a sigh.

"I do hope it will be all right," she said, looking at me. "Don't you think it is a risky thing to drive with so much gold through London?"

I laughed in order to reassure her.

"Oh, no, it is perfectly safe," I answered, "safer perhaps than if the gold were conveyed in a more pretentious vehicle. There is nothing to announce the fact that it is bearing ten thousand and eighty sovereigns to the bank."

A moment or two later I left the two ladies and returned to my interrupted duties. The affair of the weighing, the strange clause in the will, Miss Ransom's eager pathetic face, Wimburne's manifest anxiety, had all impressed me considerably, and I could scarcely get the affair off my mind. I hoped that the young couple would now be married quickly, and I could not help being heartily glad that Graham had lost, for I had by no means taken to his appearance.

My work occupied me during the greater part of the afternoon, and I did not get back again to my own house until about six o'clock. When I did so I was told to my utter amazement that Miss Cusack had

arrived and was waiting to see me with great impatience. I went at once into my consulting room, where I found her pacing restlessly up and down.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"Matter!" she cried; "have you not heard? Why, it has been cried in the streets already—the money is gone, was stolen on the way to London. There was a regular highway robbery in the Richmond



"THE LAWYER SHOT THE GOLD INTO THE GREAT COPPER SCALE PAN WHILE THE ATTENDANT ADDED THE WEIGHTS TO BALANCE IT."

Road, in broad daylight too. The facts are simply these: Two men in a dogcart met the cab, shot the driver, and after a desperate struggle, in which Edgar Wimburne was badly hurt, seized the gold and drove off. The thing was planned, of course—planned to a moment."

"But what about Tyndall?" I asked.

"He was probably in the plot. All we know is that he has escaped and has not been heard of since."

"But what a daring thing!" I cried. "They will be caught, of course; they cannot have gone far with the money."

"You do not understand their tricks,

Dr. Lonsdale; but I do," was her quick answer, "and I venture to guarantee that if we do not get that money back before the morning, Edgar Wimburne has seen the last of his fortune. Now, I mean to follow up this business, all night if necessary."

I did not reply. Her dark, bright eyes



"'IS IT TRUE?' SHE SAID, PANTING AS SHE SPOKE."

were blazing with excitement, and she began to pace up and down.

"You must come with me," she continued, "you promised to help me if the necessity should arise."

"And I will keep my word," I answered.

"That is an immense relief." She gave a deep sigh as she spoke.

"What about Miss Ransom?" I asked.

"Oh, I have left Letty at home. She is too excited to be of the slightest use."

"One other question," I interrupted, "and then I am completely at your service. You mentioned that Wimburne was hurt."

"Yes, but I believe not seriously. He has been taken to the hospital. He has already given evidence, but it amounts to very little. The robbery took place in a lonely part of the road, and just for the moment there was no one in sight."

"Well," I said, as she paused, "you

have some scheme in your head, have you not?"

"I have," she answered. "The fact is this: from the very first I feared some such catastrophe as has really taken place. I have known Mr. Graham for a long time, and—distrusted him. He has passed for a man of position and means, but I believe him to be a mere adventurer. There is little doubt that all his future depended on his getting this fortune. I saw his face when the scales declared in Edgar Wimburne's favour—but there! I must ask you to accompany me to Hammersmith immediately. On the way I will tell you more."

"We will go in my carriage," I said, "it happens to be at the door."

We started directly. As we had left the more noisy streets Miss Cusack continued—

"You remember the advertisement I showed you yesterday morning?"

I nodded.

"You naturally could make no sense of it, but to me it was fraught with much meaning. This is by no means the first advertisement which has appeared under the name of Joshua Linklater. I have observed similar advertisements, and all, strange to

say, in connection with founder's work, appearing at intervals in the big dailies for the last four or five months, but my attention was never specially directed to them until a circumstance occurred of which I am about to tell you."

"What is that?" I asked.

"Three weeks ago a certain investigation took me to Hammersmith in order to trace a stolen necklace. It was necessary that I should go to a small pawnbroker's shop—the man's name was Higgins. In my queer work, Dr. Lonsdale, I employ many disguises. That night, dressed quietly as a domestic servant on her evening out, I entered the pawnbroker's. I wore a thick veil and a plainly trimmed hat. I entered one of the little boxes where one stands to pawn goods, and waited for the man to appear.

For the moment he was engaged, and looking through a small window in the door I saw to my astonishment that the

pawnbroker was in earnest conversation with no less a person than Mr. Campbell Graham. This was the last place I should have expected to see Mr. Graham in, and I immediately used both my eyes and ears. I heard the pawnbroker address him as Linklater.

Immediately the memory of the advertisements under that name flashed through my brain. From the attitude of the two men there was little doubt that they were discussing a matter of the utmost importance, and as Mr. Graham,

nothing except watch and await events. Directly I heard the details of the robbery I wired to the inspector at Hammersmith to have Higgins's house watched. You remember that Mr. Wimburne left Kew in the cab at ten o'clock; the robbery must therefore have taken place some time about ten-twenty. The news reached me shortly after eleven, and my wire was sent off about eleven-fifteen. I mention these hours, as much may turn upon them. Just before I came to you I received a wire from the police-station containing startling news.



alias Linklater, was leaving the shop, I distinctly overheard the following words: 'In all probability Bovey will die to-night. I may or may not be successful, but in order to insure against loss we must be prepared. It is not safe for me to come here often—look out for advertisement—it will be in the agony column.'

"I naturally thought such words very strange, and when I heard of Mr. Bovey's death and read an account of the queer will, it seemed to me that I began to see daylight. It was also my business to look out for the advertisement, and when I saw it yesterday morning you may well imagine that my keenest suspicions were aroused. I immediately suspected foul play, but could do

"THERE WAS A REGULAR HIGHWAY ROBBERY IN THE RICHMOND ROAD. TWO MEN SHOT THE DRIVER OF THE CAB, SEIZED THE GOLD, AND DROVE OFF."

This was sent off about five-thirty. Here, you had better read it."

As she spoke she took a telegram from her pocket and handed it to me. I glanced over the words it contained.

"Just heard that cart was seen at Higgins's this morning. Man and assistant arrested on suspicion. House searched. No gold there. Please come down at once."

"So they have bolted



with it?" I said.

"That we shall see," was her reply.

Shortly afterwards we arrived at the police station. The inspector was waiting for us, and took us at once into a private room.

"I am glad you were able to come, Miss Cusack," he said, bowing with great respect to the handsome girl.

"Pray tell me what you have done," she answered, "there is not a moment to spare."

"When I received your wire," he said, "I immediately placed a man on duty to watch Higgins's shop, but evidently before I did this the cart must have arrived and gone—the news with regard to the cart being seen outside Higgins's shop did not reach me till four-thirty. On receiving

it I immediately arrested both Higgins and his assistant, and we searched the house from attic to cellar, but have found no gold whatever. There is little doubt that the pawnbroker received the gold, and has already removed it to another quarter."

"Did you find a furnace in the basement?" suddenly asked Miss Cusack.

"We did," he replied, in some astonishment; "but why do you ask?"

To my surprise Miss Cusack took out of her pocket the advertisement which she had shown me that morning and handed it the inspector. The man read the queer words aloud in a slow and wondering voice:—

SEND more sand and charcoal dust. Core and mould ready for casting—JOSHUA LINKLATER

"I can make nothing of it, miss," he said, glancing at Miss Cusack. "These words seem to me to have something to do with founder's work."

"I believe they have," was her eager reply. "It is also highly probable that they have something to do with the furnace in the basement of Higgins's shop."

"I do not know what you are talking about, miss, but you have something at the back of your head which does not appear."

"I have," she answered, "and in order to confirm certain suspicions I wish to search the house."

"But the place has just been searched by us," was the man's almost testy answer. "It is impossible that a mass of gold should be there and be overlooked; every square inch of space has been accounted for."

"Who is in the house now?"

"No one; the place is locked up, and one of our men is on duty."

"What size is the furnace?"

"Unusually large," was the inspector's answer.

Miss Cusack gave a smile which almost immediately vanished.

"We are wasting time," she said; "let us go there immediately."

"I must do so, of course, if nothing else will satisfy you, miss; but I assure you——"

"I HEARD THE WORDS: 'IN ALL PROBABILITY BOVEY WILL DIE TO-NIGHT.'"

"Oh, don't let us waste any more time in arguing," said Miss Cusack, her impatience now getting the better of her. "I have a reason for what I do, and must visit the pawnbroker's immediately."

The man hesitated no longer, but took a bunch of keys down from the wall. A blaze of light from a public-house guided us to the pawnbroker's, which bore the well-known sign, the three golden balls. These were just visible through the fog above us. The inspector nodded to the man on duty, and unlocking the door we entered a narrow passage into which the swing doors of several smaller compartments opened. The inspector struck a match, and, lighting the lantern, looked at Miss Cusack, as much as to say, "What do you propose to do now?"

"Take me to the room where the furnace is," said the lady.

"Come this way," he replied.

We turned at once in the direction of the stairs which led to the basement, and entered a room on the right. At the further end was an open range which had evidently been enlarged in order to allow the consumption of a great quantity of fuel, and upon it now stood an iron vessel, shaped as a chemist's crucible. Considerable heat still radiated from it. Miss Cusack peered inside, then she slowly commenced raking out the ashes with an iron rod, examining them closely and turning them over and over. Two or three white fragments she examined with peculiar care.

"One thing at least is abundantly clear," she said at last; "gold has been melted here, and within a very short time; whether it was the sovereigns or not we have yet to discover."

"But surely, Miss Cusack," said the inspector, "no one would be rash enough to destroy sovereigns."

"I am thinking of Joshua Linklater's advertisement," she said.

"*'Send more sand and charcoal dust.'* This," she continued, once more examining the white fragments, "is undoubtedly sand."

She said nothing further, but went back to the ground floor and now commenced a systematic search on her own account.

At last we reached the top floor, where the pawn-

broker and his assistant had evidently slept. Here Miss Cusack walked at once to the window and flung it open. She gazed out for a minute, and then turned to face us. Her eyes looked brighter than ever, and a certain smile played about her face.

"Well, miss," said the police inspector, "we have now searched the whole house, and I hope you are satisfied."

"I am," she replied.

"The gold is not here, miss."

"We will see," she said. As she spoke she turned once more and bent slightly out, as if to look down through the murky air at the street below.

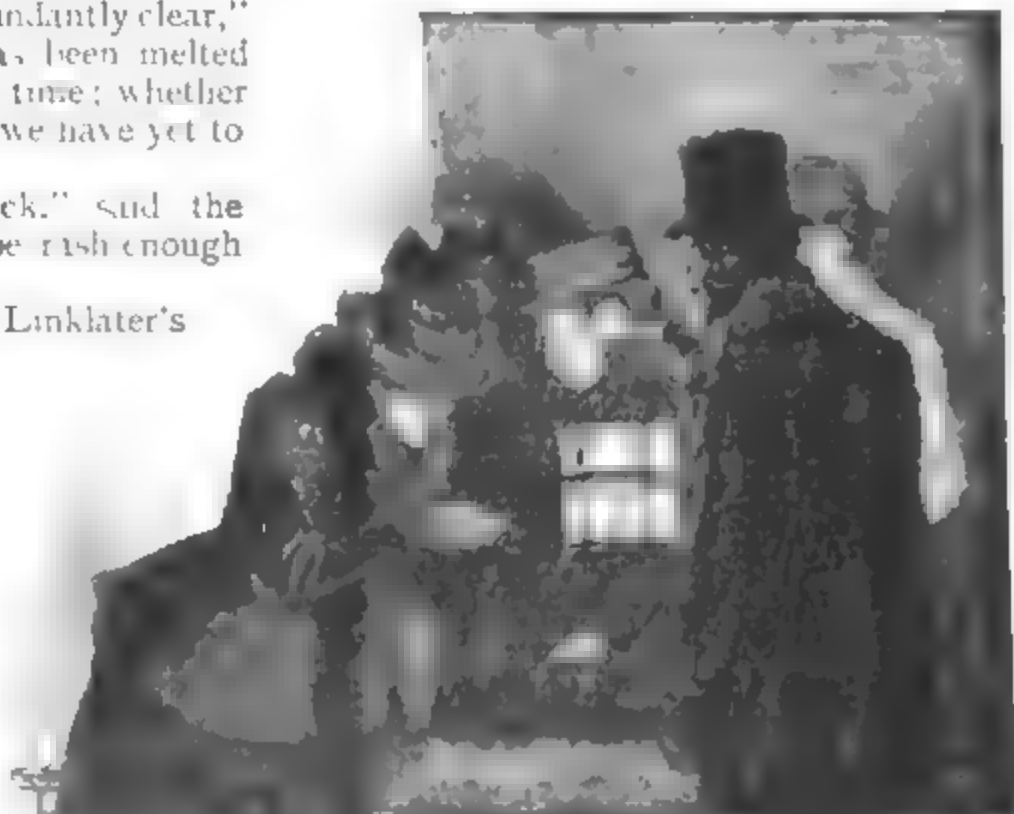
The inspector gave an impatient exclamation.

"If you have quite finished, miss, we must return to the station," he said. "I am expecting some men from Scotland Yard to go into this affair."

"I do not think they will have much to do," she answered, "except, indeed, to arrest the criminal." As she spoke she leant a little further out of the window, and then withdrawing her head said quietly, "Yes, we may as well go back now; I have quite finished. Things are exactly as I expected to find them; we can take the gold away with us."

Both the inspector and I stared at her in utter amazement.

"What do you mean, Miss Cusack?" I cried.



"MISS CUSACK EXAMINED SOME OF THE ASHES WITH PECULIAR CARE."

"What I say," she answered, and now she gave a light laugh; "the gold is here, close to us; we have only to take it away. Come," she added, "look out, both of you. Why, you are both gazing at it."

I glanced round in utter astonishment. My expression of face was reproduced in that of the inspector's.

"Look," she said, "what do you call that?" As she spoke she pointed to the sign that hung outside—the sign of the three balls.

"Lean out and feel that lower ball," she said to the inspector.

He stretched out his arm, and as his fingers touched it he started back.

"Why, it is hot," he said; "what in the world does it mean?"

"It means the lost gold," replied Miss Cusack; "it has been cast as that ball. I said that the advertisement would give me the necessary clue, and it has done so. Yes, the lost fortune is hanging outside the house. The gold was melted in the crucible downstairs, and cast as this ball between twelve o'clock and four-thirty to-day. Remember it was after four-thirty that you arrested the pawnbroker and his assistant."

To verify her extraordinary words was the work of a few moments. Owing to its great weight, the inspector and I had some difficulty in detaching the ball from its hook. At the same time we noticed that a very strong stay, in the shape of an iron-wire rope, had been attached to the iron frame from which the three balls hung.

"You will find, I am sure," said Miss Cusack, "that this ball is not of solid gold; if it were, it would not be the size of the other two balls. It has probably been cast round a centre of plaster of Paris to give it the same size as the others. This explains the advertisement with re-

gard to the charcoal and sand. A ball of that size in pure gold would weigh nearly three hundred pounds, or twenty stone."

"Well," said the inspector, "of all the curious devices that I have ever seen or heard of, this beats the lot. But what did they do with the real ball? They must have put it somewhere."

"They burnt it in the furnace, of course," she answered, "these balls, as you know, are only wood covered with gold paint. Yes, it was a clever idea, worthy of the brain of Mr. Graham; and it might have hung there for weeks and been seen by thousands passing daily, till Mr. Higgins was released from imprisonment, as nothing whatever could be proved against him."

Owing to Miss Cusack's testimony, Graham was arrested that night, and, finding that circumstances were dead against him, he confessed the whole. For long years he was one of a gang of coiners, but managed to pass as a gentleman of position. He knew old Bovey well, and had heard him speak of the curious will he had made. Knowing of this, he determined, at any risk, to secure the fortune, intending, when he had obtained it, to im-

mediately leave the country. He had discovered the exact amount of the money which he would leave behind him, and had gone carefully into the weight which such a number of sovereigns would make. He knew at once that Tyndall would be out of the reckoning, and that the competition would really be between himself and Wimburne. To provide against the contingency of Wimburne's being the lucky man, he had planned the robbery; the gold was to be melted, and made into a real golden ball, which was to hang over the pawnshop until suspicion had died away.



"GRAHAM WAS ARRESTED THAT NIGHT AND CONFESSED"



HOW MISS CUSACK DISCOVERED HIS TRICK.

BY L. T. MEADE AND ROBERT EUSTACE.

Illustrated by Ernest Prater.

ONE soft spring day in April I received a hurried message from Miss Cusack asking me to see her immediately.

It was a Sunday, I remember, and the trees were just putting on their first green. I arrived at the house in Kensington Park Gardens between four and five o'clock, and was admitted at once into the presence of my hostess. I found her in her library, a large room on the ground floor fitted with books from wainscot to ceiling, and quite unlike the ordinary boudoir of a fashionable lady.

"It is very good of you to come, Dr. Lonsdale, and if it were not that my necessities are pressing, you may be sure I would not ask you to visit me on Sunday."

"I am delighted to render you any assistance in my power," I answered; "and Sunday is not quite such a busy day with me as others."

"I want you to see a patient for me."

"A patient?" I cried.

"Yes; his name is Walter Farrell, and he and his young wife are my special friends; his wife has been my friend since her school days. I want you to see him and also Mrs. Farrell. Mrs. Farrell is very ill another doctor might do for her what you can do, but my real reason for asking you to visit her is in the hope that

you may save the husband. When you see him you may think it strange of me to call him a patient, for his disease is more moral than mental, and is certainly not physical. His wife is very ill, and he still loves her. Low as he has sunk, I believe that he would make an effort, a gigantic effort, for her sake."

"But in what does the moral insanity consist?" I asked.

"Gambling," she replied, leaning forward and speaking eagerly. "It is fast ruining him body and soul. The case puzzles me," she continued. "Mr. Farrell is a rich man, but if he goes on as he is now doing he will soon be bankrupt. The largest fortune could not stand the drain he puts upon it. He is deliberately ruining both himself and his wife."

"What form does his gambling take?" I asked.

"Horse-racing."

"And is he losing money?"

"He is now, but last year he unfortunately won large sums. This fact seems to have confirmed the habit, and now nothing, as far as we can tell, will check his downward career. He has become the partner of a bookmaker, Mr. Rashleigh—they call themselves 'Turf Commission Agents.' They have taken a suite of

rooms in Pall Mall, and do a large business. Disaster is, of course, inevitable, and for the sake of his wife I want to save him, and I want you to help me."

"I will do what I can, of course, but I am puzzled to know in what way I can be of service. Men affected with moral diseases are quite out of an ordinary doctor's sphere."

"All the same it is in your power to do something. But listen, I have not yet come to the end of my story. I have other reasons, and oddly enough they coincide. I know the history of the man whom Walter Farrell is in partnership with. I know it, although at present I am powerless to expose him. Mr. Rashleigh is a notorious swindler. He has been in some mysterious way making enormous sums of money by means of horse-racing, and I have been asked to help the Criminal Investigation Department in the matter. The fact of poor Walter Farrell being in his power has given me an additional incentive to effect his exposure. Had it not been for this I should have refused to have anything to do with the matter."

"What are Rashleigh's methods of working?" I asked.

"I will tell you. I presume you understand the principles of horse racing?"

"A few of them," I answered.

"Mr. Rashleigh's method is this. He poses as a book

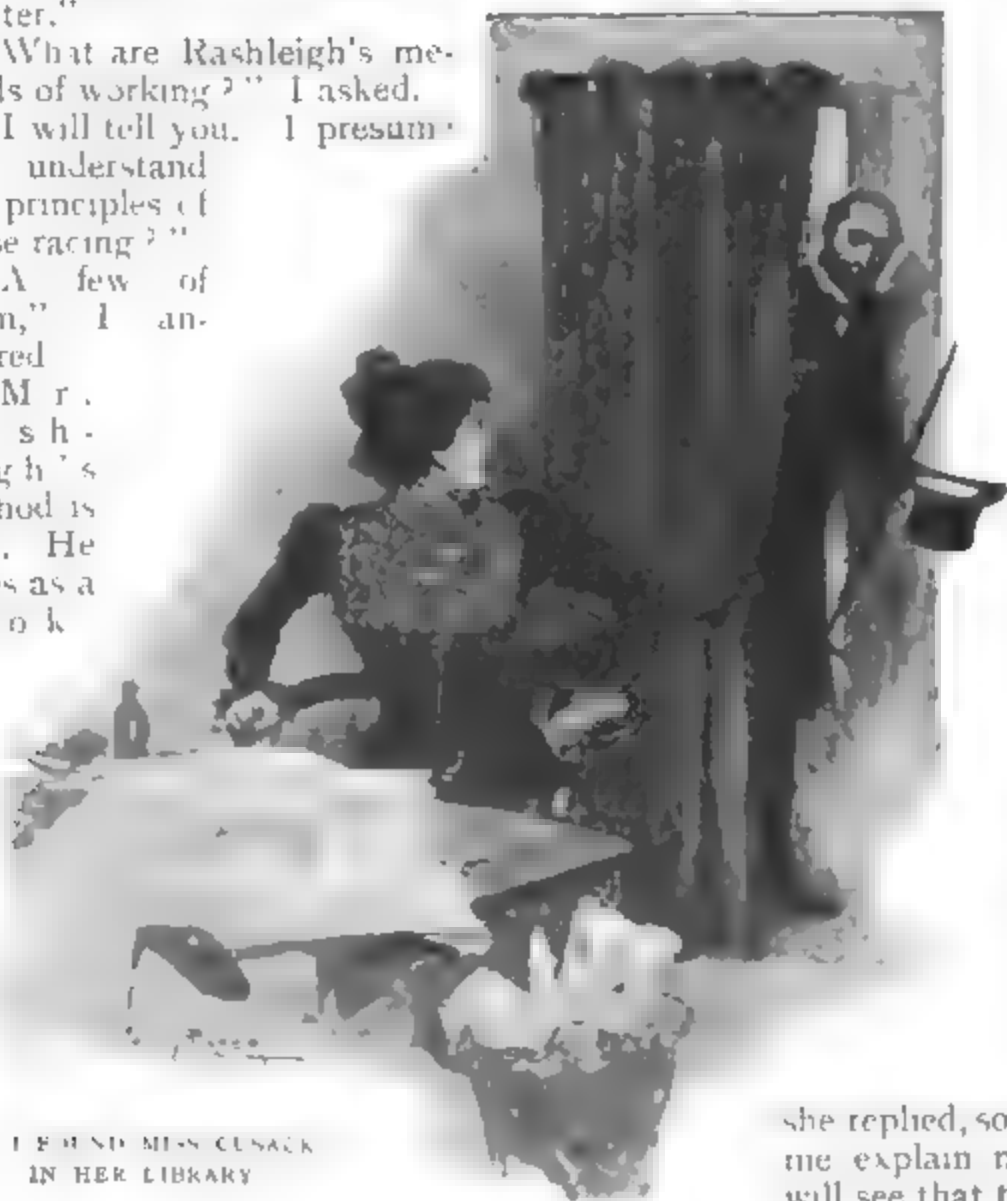
maker in want of capital. He has had several victims, and Mr. Farrell is his last. In past cases, when he secured his victim, he entered into partnership with him, took a place in the West End, and furnished it luxuriously. One of the Exchange Telegraph Company's tape machines which record the runners, winners, and the starting prices of the horses was introduced. As a matter of course betting men arrived, and for a time everything went well, and the firm made a good business. By degrees, however, they began to lose—time after time the clients backed winners for large sums, and Rashleigh and his partner finally failed. They were both apparently ruined, but after a time Rashleigh reappeared again, got a fresh victim, and the whole thing went on as before. His present victim is Walter Farrell, and the end is inevitable."

"But what does it mean?" I said. "Are the clients who back the horses really conspirators in league with Rashleigh? Do you mean to imply that they make large sums and then share the profits with Rashleigh afterwards?"

"I think it highly probable, although I know nothing. But here comes the gist of the problem. In all the cases against this man it has been clearly proved that one client in particular wins to an extraordinary extent. Now, how in the name of all that is marvellous does this client manage to get information as to what horse will win for certain? and if this were possible in one case, why should he not go and break the ring at once?"

"You are evidently well up in turf affairs," I replied, laughing, "but frauds on the turf are so abundant that there is probably some simple explanation to the mystery."

"But there is not," she replied, somewhat sharply. "Let me explain more fully, and then you will see that the chances of fraud are



I FOUND MISS CUSACK
IN HER LIBRARY

well-nigh at the vanishing point. I was at the office myself one afternoon. Walter Farrell took me in, and I closely watched the whole thing.

"It was the day of the Grand National, and about a dozen men were present. The runners and jockeys were sent through, and were called out by Mr. Farrell, who stood by the tape machine; then he drew the curtain across. I made some small bets to excuse my presence there. The others all handed in their slips to him with the names of the horses they wished to back. The machine began clicking again, the curtain was drawn round it, and I will swear no one could possibly have seen the name of the winner as it was being printed on the tape. Just at the last moment, one of the men, a Captain Vandaleur—I know of him, well in connection with more than one shady affair—went to the table with a slip, and handed it in. His was the last bet.

"The curtain was drawn back, and on Captain Vandaleur's slip was the name of the winning horse backed for five hundred pounds. The price was six to one, which meant a clear loss to Walter Farrell and Mr. Rashleigh of three thousand pounds. The whole transaction was apparently as fair and square as could be, but there is the fact; and as the flat-racing season is just beginning, if this goes on Walter Farrell will be ruined before Derby Day."

"You say, Miss Cusack, that no communication from outside was possible?"

"Certainly, no one entered or left the room. Communication from without is absolutely out of the question."

"Could the sound of the clicking convey any meaning?"

She laughed.

"Absolutely none. I had at first an idea that an old trick was being worked—that is, by collusion with the operator at the telegraph office, who waited for the winner

before sending through the runners and then sent the winning horse and jockey last on the list. But it is not so—we have made inquiries and had the clerks watched. It is quite incomprehensible. I am, I

confess, at my wits' end. Will you help me to save Walter Farrell?"

"I will try, but I am afraid my efforts will be useless; he would resent my interference,



"WHEN I TOUCHED HER HAND, I KNEW THAT SHE WAS IN AN ALMOST DANGEROUS CONDITION."

and very naturally."

"His wife is ill; I have told her that you will call on her. She knows that I hope much by your influence over her husband."

"I will certainly visit Mrs. Farrell, but only as an ordinary doctor goes to see a patient."

"I believe you will do the rest when the time comes," she answered.

I made no reply. She took out her watch.

"The Farrells live not ten doors from here," she said. "Will you visit Mrs. Farrell now? Walter will in all probability be at home as it is Sunday afternoon. Ask to see Mrs. Farrell; I will write my name on your card, and you will be admitted immediately."

"And am I to come back and tell you the result?" I asked.

"As you please. I shall be very glad to see you. Much depends on what you do."

I saw by the expression on Miss Cusack's face how intensely in earnest she was. Her enthusiasm fired mine.

"I will go at once," I said, "and hope that luck may be with me."

I left the house, and a few moments later was ringing the bell of No. 15 in the same road. A butler in livery opened the door, and on inquiring for Mrs. Farrell I was admitted immediately. I sent up my card, and a moment later a quiet-looking woman tripped downstairs, came to my side, and said in a gentle, suppressed sort of voice—

"My mistress is in bed, doctor, but she will be pleased to see you. Will you follow me? Come this way, please."

I followed the maid upstairs, we passed the drawing-room floor, and went up to the next story. Here I was ushered into a large and luxuriously-furnished bedroom. In a bed drawn near one of the windows where she could see the setting sun and some of the trees in Kensington Gardens, lay the pretty girl whom I was asked to visit. She could not have been more than nineteen years of age. Her brown hair lay tossed about the pillow, and her small, smooth, unlined face made her look more child than woman. A hectic spot burned on each of her cheeks, and when I touched her hand I knew at once that she was in a feverish and almost dangerous condition.

"So Florence Cusack has sent you, Dr. Lonsdale," was her remark to me.

"I am Dr. Lonsdale. What can I do for you, Mrs. Farrell?"

"Give me back my strength."

The maid withdrew to a distant part of the room. I made the ordinary examination of the patient. I asked her what her symptoms were. She described them in a few words.

"I have no pain," she said, "but this intolerable weakness increases day by day. It has come on most gradually, and no medicines give me the least relief. A month ago I was well enough to go out, and even walk; then I found myself too tired even to drive in a carriage, then I was too weary to come downstairs, then too prostrate to sit up. Now I stay in bed, and it tires me even to speak. Oh! I am tired of everything," she added; "tired of life, tired of—" her eyes filled with tears—"tired of misery, of misery."

To my dismay she burst into weak, hysterical crying.

"This will never do," I said; "you must tell me all, Mrs. Farrell. As far as I can see, you have no active disease of any sort.

What is the matter with you? What is consuming your life?"

"Trouble," she said, "and it is hopeless."

"You must try to tell me more."

She looked at me, dashed away her tears, and said, with a sudden spurt of spirit which I had scarcely given her credit for—

"But has not Florence Cusack told you?"

"She has certainly said something."

"Ah, then you do know all; she said she would speak to you. My husband is downstairs in the smoking-room: go and see him—do what you can for him. Oh! he will be ruined, ruined body and soul. Save him! do save him if you can."

"Do not excite yourself," I said. I rose as I spoke, and laid my hand with a slight pressure on hers. "You need not say any more. Between Miss Cusack and me your husband shall be saved. Now rest in that thought. I would not tell you a thing of this kind lightly."

"Oh! God bless you," murmured the poor girl.

I turned to the maid, who now came forward.

"I will write a prescription for your mistress," I said, "something to strengthen and calm her at the same time. You must sit up with her to-night, she is very weak."

The maid promised. I left the room. The bright eyes of the almost dying girl followed me to the door. As I stood on the landing I no longer wondered at Miss Cusack's attitude in the matter. Surely such a case must stir the depths of the most callous heart.

I went downstairs, and unannounced entered the smoking-room. A man was lying back in a deep leather chair, near one of the windows. He was a dark, thin man, with features which in themselves were refined and handsome; but now, with the haggard lines round the mouth, in the deeply set, watchful, and somewhat narrow eyes, and in a sort of recklessness which was characterised by his untidy dress, by the very set of his tie, I guessed too surely that Miss Cusack had not exaggerated the mental condition of Mr. Walter Farrell in the very least. With a few words I introduced myself.

"You must pardon this intrusion, Mr. Farrell. I am Dr. Lonsdale. Miss Cusack has asked me to call and see your wife. I have just seen her; I want to say a few words to you about her."

He looked anxious just for a moment when I mentioned his wife's name, but then a sleepy indifference crept into his eyes. He was sufficiently a gentleman, however, to show me the ordinary politeness, and motioned me to a chair. I sat down and looked full at him.

"How old is Mrs. Farrell?" I said, abruptly.

He stared as if he rather resented the question; then said, in a nonchalant tone -

"My wife is very young, she is not twenty yet."

"Quite a child," I said.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, little more than a child—just on the verge of life. It seems very sad when the young must die."

I would not have made use of this expression to an ordinary man, but I wanted to rouse and startle Farrell. I did so effectually. A veil seemed to drop from his eyes; they grew wide awake, restless, and agonised. He drew his chair close to mine, and bent forward.

"What do you mean? Surely there is not much the matter with Laura?"

"No active disease, and yet she is dying. I am sorry to tell you that, unless a complete change takes place immediately, she can scarcely live another week."

Farrell sprang to his feet.

"You don't mean that!" he cried, "my wife in danger! Dr. Lonsdale, you are talking nonsense; she has no cough, she complains of nothing. She is just a bit lazy—that is what I tell her."

"She has no strength, Mr. Farrell, and without strength we cannot live. Something is eating into her life and draining it away. I will be perfectly frank with you, for in a case of life

and death there is no time, nor is it right, to stand on ceremony. Your wife is dying because her heart is broken. It remains with you to save her; the case is in your hands."

"Now what do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. She is unhappy about you. You must understand me."

He turned very white.

"And yet I am doing all that man can for her," he said. "She expects me to smile always and live as a butterfly. Men have troubles and anxieties, and mine are——"

"Pretty considerable, I should say," I continued.

"They are. Has Florence Cusack been talking to you about me?"

"I am not at liberty to answer your question."

"You have answered it by not denying it. Florence and Laura are a pair of fools, the greatest fools that ever walked the earth."

"You do not really think that."

"I do think it. They want a man to do the impossible—they want a man to withdraw when—— There, Dr. Lonsdale, you are a man and I can talk to you. I cannot do what they want."

"Then your wife will die."

He began to pace up and down the room.

"I suppose you know all about my connection with Rashleigh?" he said, after a moment.

I nodded.

"Well, then you see how I am placed. Rashleigh is hard up just now; I cannot desert him in a moment like the present. We hope to recoup ourselves this very week, and as soon as such is the case I will withdraw from the business. Will that content you?"

"Why not withdraw at once?"



"HER HUSBAN
WAS LYING BACK
IN A DEEP SLEEP
ON HER CHAIR

"I cannot; nothing will induce me to do so. It is useless our prolonging this discussion."

I saw that I should do harm instead of good if I said anything further, and, asking for a sheet of paper, I wrote a prescription for his wife. I then left the house to return to Miss Cusack.



"MISS CUSACK CALLED AT RASHLEIGH AND FARRELL'S OFFICES IN FALL MALL."

The moment I entered her library she came eagerly to meet me.

"Well?" she said.

"You are right," I answered, speaking now with great impulse and earnestness. "I am altogether with you in this matter. I have seen Mrs. Farrell and I have had an interview with Farrell. The wife is

dying. Nay, do not interrupt me. She is dying unless relief comes soon. I had a long talk with Farrell and put the case plainly to him. He promises to withdraw from Rashleigh's firm, but not until after this week. He sticks to this resolve, thinking that he is bound in honour to support Rashleigh, whose affairs he believes are in a critical condition. In all probability before the week is up Mrs. Farrell will die. What is to be done?"

"There is only one thing to be done, Dr. Lonsdale—we must open Walter Farrell's eyes. We must show him plainly that he is Mr. Rashleigh's dupe."

"How can we do that?"

"Ah! there comes the crux of the whole situation. The further I go, the more mysterious the whole thing appears. The ordinary methods which have served me before have failed. Look here."

She pointed to a page in the book of newspaper cuttings which lay by her side.

"Through channels I need not detail, I have learned that this is a communication of one of the gang to another."

I took the book from her hands, and read the following words:—

"No mistake. Sea Foam. Jockey Club."

"Gibberish!" I said, laying the paper on the table.

"Apparently," she answered; "but Sea Foam is Captain Halliday's horse entered for the City and Suburban race to be run on the 21st—that is next Wednesday—at Epsom. For five continuous hours I have worked at those few words, applying to them what I already know of this matter. It has been of no good."

"I am scarcely surprised to hear you say so. One would want second sight to put meaning into words like those."

"Something must be done, and soon," she said. "We must expose this matter on Wednesday. I know that Walter Farrell has lost heavily this month. There is not an hour to be lost in trying to save Laura. We must keep up her courage until Wednesday. On Wednesday the whole fraud must be discovered, and

her husband liberated. You will help me?"

"Certainly."

"Then on Wednesday we will go together to Mr. Rashleigh's office. You must bet a little to allay suspicion—a few sovereigns only. You will then see him for yourself, and—who knows?—you may be able to solve the mystery."

I agreed to this, and soon afterwards took my leave.

I received a note from Miss Cusack on Tuesday evening, asking me to lunch with her on the following day. I went. The moment I entered her presence I was struck, and almost startled, by her manner. An extraordinary exaltation seemed to possess her. The pupils of her eyes were largely dilated, and glowed as if some light were behind them. Her face was slightly flushed, and her conversation was marked by an unusual vivacity and sparkle.

"I have been very busy since I saw you last," she said, "and I have now every hope that I shall succeed. I fully believe that I shall save Walter Farrell to-day from the hands of one of the cleverest scoundrels in London," she said, as we crossed the hall, "and consign the latter to penal servitude."

I could not help being much impressed by the matter-of-fact *sang froid* with which Miss Cusack spoke the last words. How was she going to obtain such big results?

"Have you no fear of personal rudeness or violence?" I asked.

"None whatever—I have made all arrangements beforehand. You will soon see for yourself."

We partook of lunch almost in silence. As I was returning to Miss Cusack's library afterwards I saw, seated in the hall, a short, squarely built, but well-dressed man.

"I shall be ready in a few moments, Mr. Marling," she said to him. "Is everything prepared?"

"Everything, miss," he replied.

Very soon afterwards we took our seats in Miss Cusack's brougham, and she explained to me that our companion was Inspector Marling, of Scotland Yard, that he was coming with us in the rôle of a new client for Messrs. Rashleigh and Farrell, and that he had made all necessary preparations.

We drove rapidly along Knightsbridge, and, going into Piccadilly, turned down St. James's Street. We stopped at last opposite a house in Pall Mall, which was to all appearance a private one. On either side of the door were brass plates bearing names, with the floor of the occupant engraved beneath. On one of the plates



"EVERYONE DRESSED
EAGERLY FORWARD TO
BE AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THE INSTRUMENT"

were the words, "Rashleigh and Farrell, Third Floor." Miss Cusack pressed the bell corresponding to this plate, and in a few moments a quietly dressed man opened the door. He bowed to Miss Cusack as if he knew her, looked at Marling and me with

a penetrating glance, and then admitted us. We went upstairs to the third landing, though before we reached it the deep voices of men in the commission agent's suite of rooms fell on our ears. Here we rang again, and after what seemed a long delay the door, which was hung with a heavy velvet curtain on the inner side, was slowly opened. Farrell stood before us.

"I thought it must be you," he said, the colour mounting into his thin face. "Come inside; we are rather a large party, as it is an important race day."

As I entered I looked round curiously. The room was thronged with a smartly-dressed crowd of men and women who were lounging about in easy-chairs and on couches. The carpet was a rich Turkey pile, and the decorations were extravagantly gorgeous. At one side of the room near the wall stood a table upon which was a small gas-lamp, several slips of paper, and a "Ruff's Racing Guide." At the further end of the room, set back in a recess, stood the tape machine, which intermittently clicked and whirred while a long strip of paper, recording news automatically, unrolled from the little wheel and fell in serpentine coils into a waste-paper basket beneath.

At one glance I saw that, when the curtain that hung from a semi-circular rod above it was drawn, no one in the room could possibly read what the wheel was printing on the tape.

"Let me introduce you to Captain Vandaleur, Dr. Lonsdale," said Miss Cusack's voice behind me.

I turned and bowed to a tall, clean-shaven man, who returned my salutation with a pleasant smile.

"You are, I presume, interested in racing?" he said.

"I am in this particular race," I answered, "the City and Suburban. I am anxious to make a small investment, and Miss Cusack has kindly introduced me to Mr. Rashleigh for the purpose."

"What particular horse do you fancy?" he asked.

"Lime-Light," I replied, at a venture.

"Ha! an outsider; well, you'll get twenties," and he turned away, for at that moment the runners for the first race began to come through. Farrell stood by the tape and called them out. Several of the men present now went to the table and wrote their fancies on the slips of paper

and handed them to Farrell. Vandaleur did not bet.

I watched the whole proceeding carefully, and certainly fraud of any kind seemed out of the question.

Miss Cusack was evidently to all appearance evincing the keenest interest in the proceedings, and betted pretty heavily herself, although the horse she selected did not turn out the winner. Another race followed, and then at 3.30 the runners and jockeys for the great race came through. Heavy bets were made on all sides, and at 3.40 came the magic word "Off," to signify that the race had started.

Farrell now instantly drew the curtain round the glass case of the instrument, while the bets continued to be made. Some were very heavy, running to hundreds of pounds. In a few moments the machine began clicking and whirring again, probably announcing the name of the winning horse.

"Have you all made your bets, gentlemen?" said Farrell.

"One moment," cried Vandaleur, going to the table and writing out a slip. "It's a poor chance, I know; but nothing venture, nothing win. Here goes for a monkey each way Sea Foam—and chance it."

He crossed the room and handed Farrell the slip.

"All right, Vandaleur," he replied, "plunging heavily as usual. Now then, anyone else want to bet? I am going to draw back the curtain."

No one answered. Farrell's face was pale, and an unmistakable air of nervousness pervaded him. Everyone pressed eagerly forward in order to be as close as possible to the instrument. Each man craned and peered over the other's shoulder. Farrell snatched back the curtain, and a shout of "Sea Foam first!" rang through the room.

I looked at Miss Cusack. She was still standing by the table, and bending over the chimney of the gas-lamp. At this instant she turned and whispered a few words to Inspector Marling. He left the room quietly and unnoticed in the buzz of conversation that ensued.

Sea Foam's price was twenty to one, and Vandaleur had therefore scored £12,500.

I went up to Farrell, who was standing near the tape machine. I saw drops of perspiration on his forehead, and his face was like death.

"I am afraid this is a heavy blow to you," I said.

He laughed with an assumption of nonchalance, then he looked me in the face and said slowly, "It is. Vandaleur is invariably lucky."

He had scarcely spoken the words before Inspector Marling reappeared. His face betrayed that something exciting was about to happen. What it was I could not guess. The next moment he had crossed the room, and going straight up to Vandaleur laid his hand on his shoulder, and said in a loud voice that rang through the room—

"Captain Vandaleur, I arrest you for conspiracy, and for fraudulently obtaining money by means of a trick."

If a thunderbolt had fallen it could hardly have caused greater consternation.

Vandaleur started back.

"Who are you? What do you mean?" he cried.

"I am Inspector Marling, of Scotland Yard. Your game is up; you had better come quietly."

The room was now in the utmost confusion. Two other men had made a dash for the door, only to fall into the arms of two officers who were waiting for them outside. Farrell, with an ashen face, stood like one struck dumb.

"For God's sake explain it all," he said at last.

"Certainly," answered Miss Cusack; "it is simply this: You have been a dupe in one of the most daring and subtle frauds ever conceived. Come this way, I will show you everything."

As she spoke she led the way from the room and up the stairs which led to the fourth floor. We all followed her and entered a room which was over the one we had just left. It was barely furnished as an office, and to our utter surprise it contained another tape machine, which was working like the one below.

"Dr. Lonsdale," said Miss Cusack, "you remember the advertisement? 'No mistake. Sea Foam. Jockey Club.'"

"Perfectly," I answered.

"When Jockey Club is mentioned in connection with horse-racing, one would

naturally suppose that *the* Jockey Club was meant," she continued. "That was what puzzled me so long. But there is another kind of Jockey Club. Look here." She pointed to an open box containing several small bottles, and took one out. Removing the glass stopper, she handed it to me.

"Do you recognise that scent?" she asked, as I sniffed at it.

"Perfectly," I replied. "Jockey Club, isn't it? Still, I feel in



"CAPTAIN VANDALEUR, I ARREST YOU FOR CONSPIRACY"

utter bewilderment."

"Now I will explain what it means, and you

wild, gentlemen, see how abilities can be used for the purposes of crime."

She went across to a little square deal table that stood in the corner, and moved it aside. Behind one of the legs which had effectually concealed it was what appeared to be an ordinary piece of gas-pipe that passed through the floor. The upper end of it was open and was fitted with a screw for a nut.

"Now see, all of you," she cried, "this pipe communicates with the lamp on the table in the room below. When the gas is turned off downstairs there is a free passage. The man who keeps this office, and

who, I fear, has contrived to escape, is in league with Captain Vandaleur, and both are, or rather were, in league with Rashleigh. These three scoundrels had a code, and this was their code. As soon as

the winner came through, and the

responding to a certain horse was sent down through the gas-pipe.

"In this case Jockey Club corresponded to Sea Foam. By means of this spray pump the vapour of the scent was passed down through the pipe to the lamp in the room below. Captain Vandaleur had only to bend over the chimney to get the scent, and write out the name of the horse which it corresponded to."

To express our unbounded astonishment and our admiration for Miss Cusack's clever solving of the mystery would require more space than I have at my disposal. As to poor Farrell, his eyes were completely opened; he looked at us all with a wild stare, and the next moment I heard him dashing downstairs.

"But how did you discover it? What made you think of it?" I said to Miss Cusack some hours later.

"Ah! that is my secret. That I cannot explain to you, at least not yet," was her reply.

Rashleigh and Vandaleur have been arrested, and both are now undergoing the punishment they so richly deserve. Farrell has learned his lesson: he has given up horse-racing, and Mrs. Farrell has recovered her strength, and also her youth and beauty.

"DO YOU RECOGNISE THAT SCENT?" ASKED MISS CUSACK

machine up here communicated the fact to the man in this room, a certain scent cor-

horse-racing, and Mrs. Farrell has recovered her strength, and also her youth and beauty.

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THE STORY OF THE MAN WITH THE
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By L. L. MERRILL AND ROBERT E. STACE.

From a story by L. L. Merrill.

"ONE evening after dinner, Frank Kave, a young fellow in whom I had long taken a deep interest, called to see me. He was Lord Somberough's private secretary, and had been conside-
a very lucky man to secure so
a private post."

"I hope I am not disturbing you, Lonsdale," he said. "But as I am passing through town on my way to Paris to-night, I thought I should like to see you. I am feeling rather hipped," he added, "and the hotel is lonely. I just looked in on the chance of finding you at home."

"I am glad to see you, Frank," was my reply. "Come in. It is a chilly night, is it not? By the way, old chap, I would have you look seedy, is anything wrong?"

He gave a slight sigh as he sank into one of my easy chairs. "He had lost flesh considerably since I had seen him last, and his fresh and ruddy complexion had left him."

"I am, out of sorts," he answered, "and a good deal worried. It is all my own stupid fault, of course." Then his face lightened a little, and he added, "But at the same time I have good news for you. I have just engaged to be married."

"I congratulate you on that score," I said, "and wish you every success."

"I think you must know something of her," he said. "Her name is Violet Fortescue. She was told of a good deal for her beauty during the last season. She lives with her mother in the Leicester Terrace, Bayswater. I think myself a great deal to have secured her."

"And what does Mrs. Fortescue say to the match?" was my next remark.

"Oh, as long as I keep my present post she is willing to allow the sacrifice, as she expresses it. Of course, I shall never be near Lonsdale, and Violet might have married any one. But that is all right," continued Kave, in a cheerful tone, "if only I can make other matters straight, I expect to be married some time next year."



"CAN YOU COME AND
GIVE ME A HAND AT ONCE?"
SHE SAID. "A MOST TERRI-
BLE AND INEVITABLE
THING HAS HAPPENED."

"What other matters do you allude to?" I asked.

"I will tell you all about it," he said. He stared straight before him for a moment. All the sorrow and misery had returned to his face. Then he continued, speaking quickly—

"I am in a frightful mess. Never take a friend's advice about buying shares, Lonsdale. I did, and I have got myself into a pretty scrape—silly, stupid fool that I am! On what I considered the best advice in the world, I spent a lot of money on some Rand Diamond shares, which I was assured would go to double their value in a few months. The old story—they went down. I had to sell, and it has pretty nearly ruined me.

"Southborough heard of it, and naturally spoke to me very seriously. He said as his secretary he could not allow me to speculate in the wild way I was doing. He had every right to dismiss me, but, knowing of my engagement to Violet Fortescue, was lenient, and overlooked my shortcomings for this time. The unfortunate part of it is that he *thinks* I am out of the wood, whereas I am not. I am in debt to a man in town, and he means to press me if I cannot pay up, and very shortly; too. Well, well, I must hope for the best, and will quiet my creditor with a fairly good cheque when I get my salary at Christmas. I am now going to Paris on a mission of the greatest secrecy, importance, and responsibility."

"You certainly jeopardised your position when you went in for that big plunge," was my reply, "and I am sorry to hear you are not clear yet."

"No, that is the real worry, but I cannot talk about it any more at present."

"How long do you stay in Paris?"

"I shall be back the day after to-morrow, arriving in London after midnight; and shall sleep at the Fortescues'. The next day I go down to Yorkshire, where Lord Southborough is staying. My mission to Paris is alone enough to make me a little anxious. However, I dare not breathe a word to anyone, not even to you."

"You are quite right," I said. "I only trust everything will go well. Be sure you send me a line when your wedding day is fixed."

"I should like to introduce you to Violet, Lonsdale; I am sure you would like her."

"I expect I should," I replied, heartily.

On the next day and the following one I was specially busy, not getting home until quite late. During those hours of heavy work I had little time to give Kaye a thought. I had just gone to bed on the evening of the second day, when, to my annoyance, I heard my night-bell ring long and violently. I did not want to go out again, being somewhat tired, but of course there was no help for it. I quickly dressed and went down to the door. As I opened it I saw to my astonishment a girl standing on the door-step, and a cab stood at the kerb.

"Are you Dr. Lonsdale?" she asked, quickly.

"Yes. What is the matter?" I replied.

"Please let me come in for a moment to speak to you. My name is Fortescue—Violet Fortescue. Can you come at once to see Frank—I mean Mr. Kaye? A most terrible and inexplicable thing has happened."

"What?" I said, throwing open the door of my consulting-room.

"Frank has just returned from Paris. Something most mysterious happened to him in the train. He was brought to our house half an hour ago by a policeman from Victoria, very ill, scarcely conscious. After the policeman left, he partly recovered consciousness, looked round him wildly, declared that he had been robbed of some great valuables while in the train, and then begged of me to fetch you immediately. He says he must see you without a moment's delay."

"Of course I'll come immediately," I answered; "you can tell me more as we go."

I put into a bag a few things I thought I should require, and we started off.

"Have we far to go?" I asked.

"Only to Bayswater; we live in Leicester Terrace."

"Do you suspect Mr. Kaye of having been drugged?" I asked.

"No one can tell. As soon as he recovered any degree of consciousness he mentioned your name. He gave your address, and begged someone to fetch you, but when I left the house he was again in a queer sort of faint."

We soon stopped at the door of No. 26, Leicester Terrace, which was instantly opened, and we entered. An elderly lady hurried from one of the doorways leading into the hall.

"I am Mrs. Fortescue," she said; "are you Dr. Lonsdale?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Then will you please come at once to see Mr. Kaye? He seems somewhat better now."

I found my young friend stretched on a sofa at the further end of a large room. His face was white, and his whole appearance ghastly. He was breathing heavily, and although a faint smile crossed his lips when he saw me, I perceived that he was still under the influence of some narcotic - what, I could not possibly define.

"Are you in pain?" I asked.

"My head aches, otherwise I have no pain. But please do not think about my health, that is not of the slightest consequence. What shall I do about the jewels?"

"The jewels!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, I have been robbed of jewels of immense value. What is to be done?"

"Tell me all you can remember before you lost consciousness," I said. "Where were you?"

"In the train. I engaged a private carriage from Dover; I thought it would be safest, as I was carrying such priceless gems. For some time I felt perfectly well, then I began to grow sleepy. I struggled against the feeling, but it became overmastering, and I suppose I yielded to it. I remembered no more till I woke up again at Victoria with just enough sense to tell the police officer my name and address. The moment I had done this I dozed off once more."

"Have you ever had a similar attack?" I asked.

"Never. Of course it was foul play, but how executed, heaven only knows. What will happen to me? I am a ruined man. I was bringing over Lady Southborough's jewels, worth I don't know what."

I examined him carefully, but could find

no paralysis or indication whatever as to the cause of his extraordinary attack.

"Did you take anything on the boat or at Dover before starting in the train?" I asked.

"Nothing whatever; I am a bad sailor, and was ill crossing. I had nothing since leaving the hotel in Paris."

"Nor smoked at all, I presume?"

"No, I could not."

"It is clear then that you were not drugged, for your sickness crossing would have



"I WROTE FROM HIS DICTATION A DESCRIPTION OF LADY SOUTHBOROUGH'S JEWELS"

counteracted that," I remarked. "Do you feel better now?"

"I am nearly all right again. Has Lord Southborough been telegraphed to? He is at his country place in Yorkshire."

"It is too late to wire to him to-night," I answered. "You must just keep yourself quiet, Kaye, where you are. Don't worry, I will see to everything."

I wrote a prescription and, enjoining perfect quiet, left him. Whatever had happened during his brief journey from Dover to London, the danger for the present was over. I went into the next room, where Mrs. and Miss Fortescue were waiting

to receive me. They both came up eagerly as I appeared.

"What do you think of it all, Dr. Lonsdale?" asked the mother.

"I do not know what to think," I replied, "I am as much in the dark as you are. All I know is that Kaye himself is all right. By the way, of course the police have been informed of the robbery?"

"Not yet," answered Mrs. Fortescue. "Frank did not know himself that he had

I took out my note-book and wrote from his dictation.

"One large brilliant and sapphire cross, a pin made in the form of a crescent set with five very large brilliants, a pair of bracelets composed of turquoises and brilliants, and a diamond necklace with a cluster of pink pearls in the centre. These, I think, were all," continued Kaye. "They were in a tin despatch box, and worth, I believe, fifteen thousand pounds."

"Thank you," I answered. "I will go to Scotland Yard immediately. Keep quiet here. I will see you the first thing in the morning."

I hurriedly took my leave, and drove to Scotland Yard to give the required information.

It was not until I was once more driving home, at nearly three o'clock, that I began to think quietly over the matter; and then my mind suddenly flew to Miss Cusack. Here was the very case for this extraordinary woman; her advice in the present state of things would be little short of invaluable. I determined to go to see her the first thing in the morning.

On reaching home I had a few hours' sleep, and, breakfasting early, reached Miss Cusack's house at nine o'clock. She saw me at once in her library.

"I want your help badly in a most distressing and mysterious affair," I said at once.

Her eyes brightened.

"What is it?" she asked.

I proceeded to give her in detail an account of the previous night's occurrence. She sat perfectly still, and made no observation until I had finished speaking.

"This is great luck," she said then.

"Luck! I cannot see much luck about it; I do not understand you," I said.

"Perhaps not, yet it is luck. I know something already of this matter. Of course," she continued, "I know nothing with regard to this individual case, but cases of a similar nature have lately taken place on the Continent, and I have little doubt that they are the work of the same gang, or the same individual. The fact is, they have been puzzling the Paris Prefect of Police for months. Mr. Kaye will lose his post as private secretary to Lord Southborough if any suspicion rests



"WHY DID YOU SEND THAT GIRL TO ME?" SAID MISS CUSACK.

been robbed until after the police were gone."

"Then this must be done immediately," I cried; "the delay is most unfortunate. I will give information at once. But, first of all, I must get an exact description of the jewels from Kaye."

I hurried back to the room where he was lying on the sofa.

"You must give me a description of Lady Southborough's jewels," I said.

"Of course," he answered.

upon him. It must be our business to clear him and bring the thieves to justice—no easy matter, I can assure you. This case, however, freshens the scent of the trail which I have already alluded to, and I may as well say plainly that I am languishing for something to do."

As she said the last words, hope sprang within me. I knew enough of Miss Cusack to feel certain that the mystery would now be cleared up.

"Leave me now, Dr. Lonsdale," she said, quickly; "you shall hear from me as soon as I find anything out."

Some days passed without anything fresh occurring. On the evening of the third day I had a brief note from Kaye. Miss Cusack was right. Lord Southborough had informed him that he would dispense with his services.

"Poor fellow!" I thought, "things are indeed going badly with him."

On the following morning, rather to my surprise, Miss Fortescue called to see me. She came ostensibly as a patient, and was shown into my consulting-room.

"Are you ill?" I said, the moment I saw her, "if so, I shall be glad to go into your case, but otherwise——"

"Oh, I know what you would say," she interrupted, "and I am not ill—that is, in body; but have you never ministered to a mind diseased, Dr. Lonsdale?"

"I am afraid that is scarcely my province," I answered. I looked at her earnestly as I spoke. On the two last occasions when I had seen her, I had scarcely time to notice her personal appearance, but now I saw that her face bore considerable claims to great beauty; it was also the sort of face which interests me immensely, being full of vivacity and charm, the features good, the eyes bright, the lips kindly.

"That girl will make a good wife to the man who wins her," I said to myself, and I sighed with a fresh access of pity for poor Kaye.

"I know Frank has written to you," she said, interrupting my thoughts. "Everything is too dark, too dreadful. Lord Southborough has requested him to resign his post. Beyond doubt, he suspects him; his prospects are ruined. What is to be done?"

"We must clear him," I said; and as I spoke I gave an impatient movement. What was the matter with Miss Cusack?

Why had she not written? Three or four days had passed since I had seen her, and in the interval I had had no line, no telegram, nothing. As a rule she was very quick in all her movements; her mind, on occasions like the present, seemed to work like a flash. I saw that Miss Fortescue was gazing at me with impatience.

"When you say you will clear him, why do you not set about it?" she asked.

"I have taken steps," I replied; "I am afraid this is a case for patience."



THEY HAD BEEN
TOO AND STILL IN AN
ON THE FLOOR

"Patience!" she answered, with a sigh, "and all the time he, poor fellow, is going under. This terrible trouble is weighing on his mind. He is the best fellow in the world, but who can stand up against suspicion?"

"While you do not share in those suspicions," I answered, "Kaye has no cause to lose his faith."

"I share in them!" she exclaimed. "I would rather cut off my right hand. Some

scoundrels are at the bottom of this. Oh! Dr. Lonsdale, do something, and let me help you. I shall lose my senses if there is nothing for me to do."

"I am already asking a woman to help me," I said, slowly, "although I have not mentioned her name."

"A woman? But no other woman ought to help Frank but me."

I smiled.

"Do not be impatient," I said; "and you have no cause to be jealous. The lady to whom I refer has one of the most acute detective brains in the whole of London. Now, I tell you what I will do. I will write her a note, and you shall take it to her. I believe she is working hard in the matter, but in a case like this there is not a moment to lose."

"Oh, how good you are!" said the girl.

Having directed the letter, I handed it to Miss Fortescue.

During the rest of my day's busy work I often wondered what sort of interview Violet Fortescue and Miss Cusack had had. The day itself passed, however, and many days followed in its train, and I heard nothing fresh. It was not until the following Wednesday week that I received a telegram from Miss Cusack. It was worded as follows:—

"Be at home at five o'clock this evening. Will call to see you."

My heart leapt as I read the words. At five o'clock to the minute Miss Cusack was shown into my consulting-room.

"Why did you send that girl to me?" was her first remark.

"I hope nothing disastrous has followed her visit," I replied.

"Only to me," she said, panting a little. "Was I not enthusiastic enough before—completely taken out of myself, worried to the last degree? And she came, poor little thing, with her passion and her agony, and drove me to extremities. But I have learned something at last, and of value."

As Miss Cusack spoke I looked at her attentively, and noticed with concern the change in her looks. She had lost flesh, and her eyes were too bright and large. With her usual intuition she observed my glance.

"I am not well, and I don't wonder," she said. "I have not slept for three nights. It is the girl's fault. She has set the old desire going to the point of madness. I am on wires just now."

Her white fingers locked and unlocked

themselves in her lap with a strange and nervous automatism which was painful to witness.

"At any rate," she said, after a pause, which I did not interrupt, "I have been wearing myself out to some purpose."

"Have you found the thieves?"

"Not yet; but please listen. I have discovered a good deal, though not all. In the first place, there is only one thief. I have seen him, and he has escaped me. His cunning is beyond words. He evidently knew of Mr. Kaye's strange position, and doubtless followed him from Paris. An empty bottle, such as is used for chloroform, has been found beside the line, half an hour's ride from Dover—a nasty piece of evidence against Mr. Kaye. This bottle was, beyond doubt, put there by the man to whom I allude. Oddly enough, he is a very remarkable-looking man—a bad thing for his own safety."

"What is his name?" I asked.

"He goes by many aliases. When I came across him a few days ago he was dressed as a country clergyman, and had the name 'The Reverend John Wilberforce' painted on his luggage. I have looked in the 'Clerical Directory,' and see that there is such a man. He is the rector of a small living in Yorkshire. I went down there yesterday, and saw him."

"You went to Yorkshire!" I exclaimed. She nodded.

"The Rev. John Wilberforce is small, stout, and red-haired," she continued. "Now, the man who went under his name is slightly above the middle height, clean-shaven, has hollow cheeks, bushy eyebrows, prominent ears, and, most strange of all—a *false nose*. This nose is cleverly made, and doubtless constantly changed, but it did not escape me. It is kept in its place with spectacles. Please remember that description, Dr. Lonsdale. I tell you on my solemn word of honour that until we find that man poor Mr. Kaye will never lift up his head again, and that pretty girl will have no happiness."

More than a month passed away. Miss Cusack had no fresh news of any sort to impart to me. I began to doubt whether Frank Kaye would ever be cleared, when on a certain wintry afternoon I found myself travelling up to Waterloo from Bournemouth.

When I entered the carriage I noticed seated at the further end a man who was enveloped in a long ulster with a turned-up

collar. Beyond a casual glance, I paid no further attention to him. By degrees, however, as we sped northward, I found myself regarding him with more and more interest. His was a clean-shaven face, and from the first I thought there was something strange about it, which I could not define. Was it the spectacles? Suddenly I started. The man had a false nose. Beautifully made though it was, the junction of the composition with the skin at the edge of the nasal bones was just perceptible. In a flash, Miss Cusack's description of the man so long wanted struck me. It tallied to an extraordinary degree — bushy eyebrows, hollow cheeks, prominent ears, and, more than anything, the nose. The man was no longer clad as a clergyman, but in the ordinary dress of an English gentleman. He continued quietly to read his paper, and took not the least notice of me. I leant back in my seat. I felt the blood leave my face. Could this be the man we were looking for the scoundrel who had ruined my poor friend, who had broken the heart of the girl that friend loved?

I instantly made up my mind to follow him. There was no other course.

On arriving at Waterloo the man with the false nose immediately entered a hansom. I took another, and desired the driver to follow the first hansom. This he did, and at half-past eight the two hansoms entered Paddington side by side. I paid my fare, and went up to the booking office. The stranger was before me. I heard him ask for a first single to Bristol. My blood was up, and now I had started on my mad mission I felt that I must see it

through. I also took a first-class ticket to Bristol.

The 8.50 express was in the station. Just for a few moments I lost sight of the man, and walked rapidly down the platform, but the next instant I caught sight of him settling himself in a first-class carriage, on the window of which was pasted a slip of paper, "Reserved." I further noticed that there was another reserved



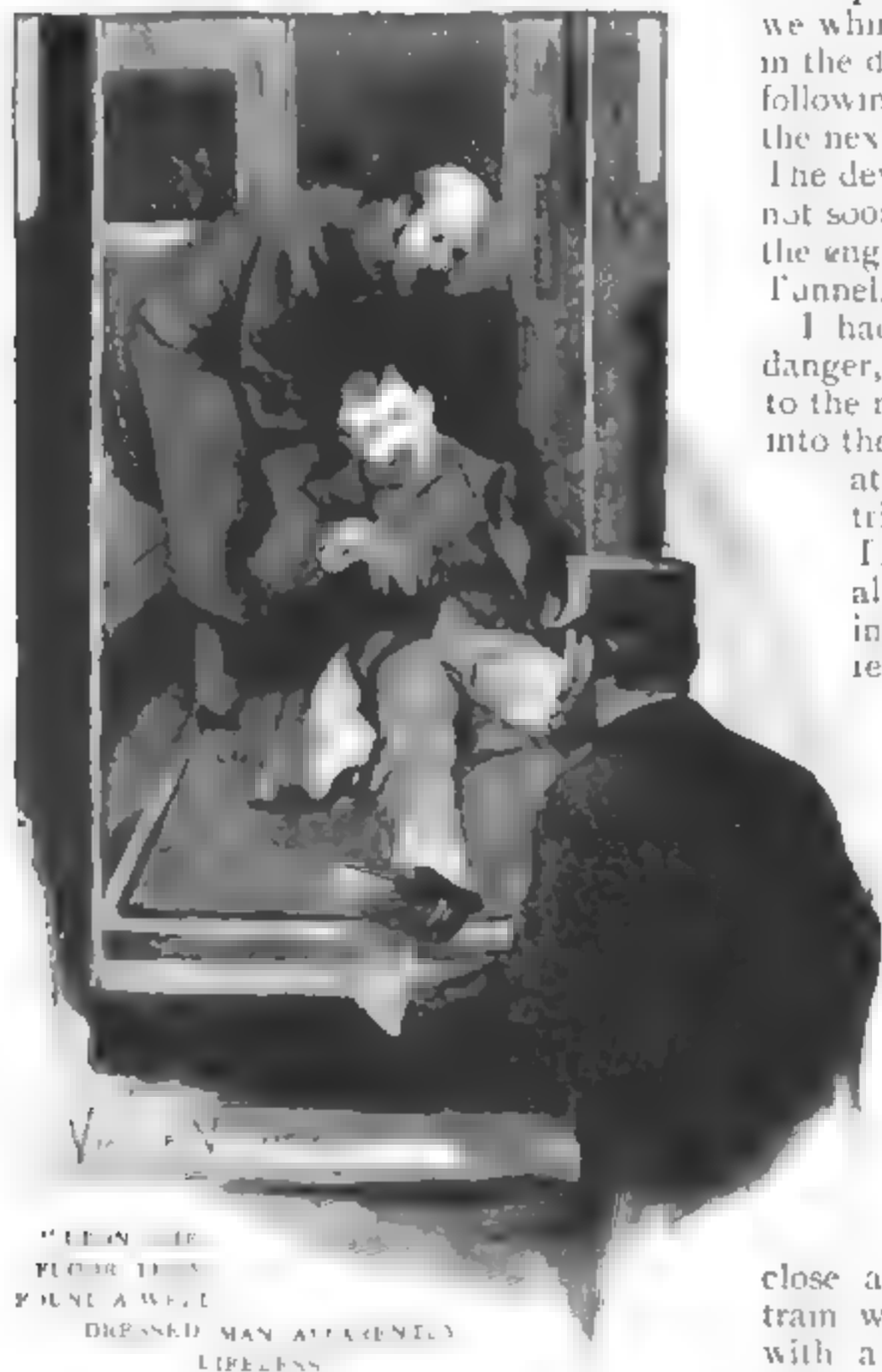
"THE MAN LOST HIS BALANCE AND FELL FROM THE CARRIAGE INTO THE DARKNESS."

carriage a little way down the platform. I immediately entered the carriage between the two reserved ones. It had one other occupant—an old gentleman, who was evidently preparing himself for a long night's journey.

We started punctually, and soon cleared the suburbs, and began to rush westwards through the night. On and on we sped. At Swindon I observed to my satisfaction that the stranger did not leave his carriage.

I glanced in, and saw that he was quietly reading in a corner seat.

The night happened to be intensely cold, and all the carriage windows were, of course, up. Once more we started for a run of three-quarters of an hour before reaching Bristol. It must have been just after passing Chippenham, for I remembered the lights of a biggish station had just flashed by, and my fellow traveller



"HE IN THE
FLOOR THERE
FOUND A WELL
DRESSED MAN APPARENTLY
LIFELESS."

was sound asleep in his corner, when suddenly something moving outside the closed window attracted my attention.

I started and turned. I had obtained but the most fleeting glance, yet it was long enough for me to see the figure of a man on the footboard, and an arm swing past, reaching to one of the brass brackets outside the other reserved carriage. I sprang to my feet instantly, opened the window, and looked out. All was dark-

ness. Then, with an impulsiveness that knew no consideration of consequences, I opened the carriage door, and also stepped down on to the footboard. I began immediately working my way in the direction in which the figure had gone. I knew now that I was right, but what awful event might be in progress I had not the slightest idea. I had not far to go. The door of the carriage also marked "Reserved" was open, and was swinging to and fro as we whirled along. As I reached it I saw in the doorway the figure of the man I was following. His back was turned to me, but the next instant he flashed round swiftly. The devilish expression on his face I shall not soon forget. There was a whistle from the engine, and we plunged into the Box Tunnel.

I had just time to realise my hideous danger, for I was hanging on by one hand to the rail, preparatory to swinging myself into the carriage, when he saw me, dashed at me with arms outstretched, and tried to hurl me back on to the lines. There was one terrific blow, that almost numbed my arm; but, swinging as I was, my body, instead of receiving the full shock of the impact, yielded to it. I swung slowly back, as with a shriek the man himself, losing his balance, plunged head-first past me into the darkness. The next moment I was safely in the carriage, and had wrenched back the communication with the guard.

Upon the floor lay a well dressed man, apparently lifeless. His lips were blue and his eyes closed. I tried to raise him. I now noticed that the air of the carriage, though cold, felt very close and stuffy. In five minutes the train was at a standstill, and the guard, with a horror-stricken face, was at the door. I explained everything to him—that is, as far as I was able. To search the carriage for whatever devilish agent had caused the insensibility of the man was the work of a moment, and then it was that the stunning truth came to light. Upon the floor beneath the seat was a small white substance, which for the moment I thought was merely a lump of chalk, but as I touched it my fingers experienced a feeling as if they were burned with some powerful corrosive. I knew then

what it was, and I also knew its effect. It was a piece of solid gas—solid carbon dioxide—deadly, and impossible to detect by reason of its having no smell.

I now perceived how easily the whole plot could be carried out. It was only necessary to throw the carbon into the carriage beneath the seat just before the train started; it would then gradually volatilise, fill the carriage with a poisonous gas, and render the occupant, if the windows were closed, as they would be on such a night, as insensible as the Chinese are in the fumes of their opium pipes. The whole thing would be almost impossible of detection, for the very agent itself would disappear into invisible gas, leaving no trace behind.

Yes, here lay the mystery. The rush of fresh air when the villain burst open the door rendered the gas in the carriage sufficiently diluted for him to effect his purpose, but not enough to awaken the sleeper.

The fell design was easily accounted for in this case. In a very short time the victim recovered consciousness. He gave a brief account of himself. He was, he said, the

junior partner in a well-known firm of numismatists, and was taking a quantity of rare and valuable gold coins to a gentleman in Bristol. These coins were worth not less than a thousand pounds.

Early the next morning the body of the man with the false nose was discovered frightfully mutilated in the Box Tunnel. A notebook was found in his pocket, which the police immediately searched. One or two addresses were in it, and after a great deal of trouble on their part evidence was forthcoming which abundantly proved that this man was the very one who had stolen Lady Southborough's jewels, and had by the strange and awful means which I had discovered rendered poor Kaye insensible.

Those jewels were, alas! never recovered, but otherwise what was wrong was put right.

Lord Southborough, seeing that Kaye was abundantly vindicated, was full of compunction for his own suspicions. He not only offered him once more the post of secretary, but also a considerable increase of salary. Thus Violet and he were enabled to marry.



SHALL I ENLIST?

K. T. Snow. Photo

THE OUTSIDE LEDGE.

A CABLEGRAM MYSTERY.

BY L. T. MEADE AND ROBERT EUSTACE.

Illustrated by Victor Vinner.

I HAD not heard from my old friend Miss Cusack for some time, and was beginning to wonder whether anything was the matter with her, when on a certain Tuesday in the November of the year 1892 she called to see me.

"Dr. Lonsdale," she said, "I cannot stand defeat, and I am defeated now."

"Indeed," I replied, "this is interesting. You so seldom are defeated. What is it all about?"

"I have come here to tell you. You have heard, of course, of Oscar Hamilton, the great financier? He is the victim of a series of frauds that have been going on during the last two months and are still being perpetrated. So persistent and so unaccountable are they that the cleverest agents in London have been employed to detect them, but without result. His chief dealings are, as

you know, in South African Gold Mines, and his income is, I believe, nearest fifty than thirty thousand a year. From time to time he receives private advices as to the gold crushings, and operates accord-

ingly. You will say, of course, that he gambles, and that such gambling is not very



"THE CABLEGRAM WAS OPENED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE YOUNGER PARTNER AND OF THE DETECTIVE BY MR. HAMILTON."

scrupulous, but I assure you the matter is not at all looked at in that light on the Stock Exchange.

"Now, there is a dealer in the same market, a Mr. Gildford, who, by some means absolutely unknown, obtains the same advice in detail, and of course either forestalls Mr. Hamilton, or, on the other hand, discounts the profits he would make, by buying or selling exactly the same shares. The information, I am given to understand, is usually cabled to Oscar Hamilton in cipher by his confidential agent in South Africa, whose *bona fides* is unquestionable, since it is he who profits by Mr. Hamilton's gains.

"This important information arrives as a rule in the early morning about nine o'clock, and is put straight into my friend's hands in his office in Lennox Court. The details are discussed by him and his partner, Mr. Le Marchant, and he immediately afterwards goes to his broker to do whatever business is decided on. Now, this special broker's name is Edward Gregory, and time after time, not invariably, but very often, Mr. Gregory has gone into the house and found Mr. Gildford doing the identical deals that he was about to do."

"That is strange," I answered.

"It is; but you must listen further. To give you an idea of how every channel possible has been watched, I will tell you what has been done. In the first place it is practically certain that the information found its way from Mr. Hamilton's office to Mr. Gildford's, because no one knows the cipher except Mr. Hamilton and his partner, Mr. Le Marchant."

"Wireless telegraphy," I suggested.

Miss Cusack smiled, but shook her head.

"Listen," she said. "Mr. Gildford, the dealer, is a man who also has an office in Lennox Court, four doors from the office of Mr. Hamilton, also close to the Stock Exchange. He has one small room on the third floor back, and has no clerks. Now Mr. Gregory, Mr. Hamilton's broker, has his office in Draper's Gardens. Yesterday morning an important cable was expected, and extraordinary precautions were adopted. Two detectives were placed in the house of Mr. Gildford, of course unknown to him—one actually took up his position on the landing outside his door, so that no one could enter by the door without being seen. Another was at the telephone exchange to watch if any message

went through that way. Thus you will see that telegrams and telephones were equally cut off.

"A detective was also in Mr. Hamilton's office when the cable arrived, the object of his presence being known to the clerks, who were not allowed to use the telephone or to leave the office. The cable was opened in the presence of the younger partner, Mr. Le Marchant, and also in the presence of the detective, by Mr. Hamilton himself. No one left the office, and no communication with the outside world took place. Thus, both at Mr. Gildford's office and at Mr. Hamilton's, had the information passed by any visible channel it must have been detected either leaving the former office or arriving at the latter."

"And what happened?" I inquired, beginning to be much interested in this strange story.

"You will soon know what happened. I call it witchery. In about ten minutes' time Mr. Hamilton left his office to visit his broker, Mr. Gregory, at the Stock Exchange, everyone else, including his partner, Mr. Le Marchant, remaining in the office. On his arrival at the Stock Exchange he told Mr. Gregory what he wanted done. The latter went to carry out his wishes, but came back after a few moments to say that the market was spoiled, Mr. Gildford having just arrived and dealt heavily in the very same shares and in the same manner. What do you make of it, Dr. Lonsdale?"

"There is only one conclusion for me to arrive at," I answered; "the information does not pass between the offices, but by some previously arranged channel."

"I should have agreed with you but for one circumstance, which I am now going to confide to you. Do you remember a pretty girl, a certain Evelyn Dudley, whom you once met at my house? She is the only daughter of Colonel Dudley of the Coldstream Guards, and at her father's death will be worth about seven thousand a year."

"Well, and what has she to do with the present state of things?"

"Only this: she is engaged to Mr. Le Marchant, and the wedding will take place next week. They are both going to dine with me to-night. I want you to join the party in order that you may meet them and let me know frankly afterwards what you think of him."

"But what has that to do with the frauds?" I asked.

"Everything, and this is why." She lowered her voice, and said in an emphatic whisper, "I have strong reasons for suspecting Mr. Le Marchant, Mr. Hamilton's young partner, of being in the plot."

"Good heavens!" I cried, "you cannot mean that. The frauds are to his own loss."

"Not at all. He has only at present a small share in the business. Yesterday from a very private source I learned that he was in great financial difficulties, and in the hands of some money-lenders; in short, I imagine—mind, I don't accuse him yet—that he is staving off his crash until he can marry Evelyn Dudley,

when he hopes to right him-

self. If the crash came first, Colonel Dudley would not allow the marriage.

But when it is a

You see, therefore, there is no time to lose in clearing up the mystery."

"There certainly is not," I replied, rising. "Well, if you will kindly wait here I will not keep you many minutes."

I went up to my room, dressed quickly, and returned in a very short time. We entered the brougham which was standing at the door, and at once drove off to Miss Cusack's house. She ushered me into the drawing-room, where a tall, dark-eyed girl was standing by the fire.

"Evelyn," said Miss Cusack, "you have often heard me talk of my great friend



"WHAT A CURIOUS SORT OF PERFUME," SAID MISS CUSACK, FROWNING, AND GLANCING ROUND HER."

fait accompli he will be, as it were, forced to do something to prevent his son-in-law going under. Now I think you know about as much of the situation as I do myself. Evelyn is a dear friend of mine, and if I can prevent it I don't want her to marry a scoundrel. We dine at eight—it is now past seven, so if you will dress quickly I can drive you back in my brougham. Evelyn is to spend the night with me, and is already at my house. She will entertain you till I am ready. If nothing happens to prevent it, the wedding is to take place next Monday.

Dr. Lonsdale. I have just persuaded him to dine with us to-night. Dr. Lonsdale, may I introduce you to Miss Evelyn Dudley?"

I took the hand which Evelyn Dudley stretched out to me. She had an attractive, bright face, and during Miss Cusack's absence we each engaged the other in brisk conversation. I spoke about Miss Cusack, and the girl was warm in her admiration.

"She is my best friend," she said. "I lost my mother two years ago, and at that time I do not know what I should have

done but for Florence Cusack. She took me to her house and kept me with her for some time, and taught me what the sin of rebellion meant. I loved my mother so passionately. I did not think when she was taken from me that I should ever know a happy hour again."

"And now, if report tells true, you are going to be very happy," I continued, "for Miss Cusack has confided some of your story to me. You are soon to be married?"

"Yes," she answered, and she looked thoughtful. After a moment she spoke again.

"You are right: I hope to be very happy in the future—happier than I have ever been before. I love Henry Le Marchant better than anyone else on earth."

I felt a certain pity for her as she spoke. After all, Miss Cusack's intuitions were wonderful, and she did not like Henry Le Marchant—nay, more, she suspected him of underhand dealings. Surely she must be wrong. I hoped when I saw this young man that I should be able to divert my friend's suspicions into another channel.

"I hope you will be happy," I said; "you have my best wishes."

"Thank you," she replied. She sat down near the fire as she spoke, and unfurled her fan.

"Ah! there is a ring," she said, the next moment. "He is coming. You know perhaps that he is dining here to-night. I shall be so pleased to introduce you."

At the same instant Miss Cusack entered the room.

"Our guest has arrived," she said, looking from Miss Dudley to me, and she had scarcely uttered the words before Henry Le Marchant was announced.

He was a tall, young-looking man, with a black, short moustache and very dark eyes. His manner was easy and self-possessed, and he looked with frank interest at me when his hostess introduced him.

The next moment dinner was announced. As the meal proceeded and I was considering in what words I could convey to Miss Cusack my impression that she was altogether on a wrong tack, something occurred which I thought very little of at the time, but yet was destined to lead to most important results presently.

The servant had just left the room when

a slight whiff of some peculiar and rather disagreeable odour caught my nostrils. I was glancing across the table to see if it was due to any particular fruit, when I noticed that Miss Cusack had also caught the smell.

"What a curious sort of perfume!" she said, frowning slightly. "Evelyn, have you been buying any special new scent to-day?"

"Certainly not," replied Miss Dudley; "I hate scent, and never use it."

At the same moment Le Marchant, who had taken his handkerchief from his pocket, quickly replaced it, and a wave of blood suffused his swarthy cheeks, leaving them the next instant ashy pale. His embarrassment was so obvious that none of us could help noticing it.

"Surely that is the smell of valerian," I said, as the memory of what it was came to me.

"Yes, it is," he replied, recovering his composure and forcing a smile. "I must apologise to you all. I have been rather nervous lately, and have been ordered a few drops of valerian in water. I cannot think how it got on my handkerchief. My doctor prescribed it for me yesterday."

Miss Cusack made a common-place reply, and the conversation went on as before.

Perhaps my attitude of mind was preternaturally suspicious, but it occurred to me that Le Marchant's explanation was a very lame one. Valerian is not often ordered for a man of his evidently robust health, and I wondered if he were speaking the truth.

Having a case of some importance to attend, I took my departure shortly afterwards.

During the three following days I heard nothing further from Miss Cusack, and made up my mind that her conjectures were all wrong and that the wedding would of course take place.

But on Saturday these hopes were destined to be rudely dispersed. I was awakened at an early hour by my servant, who entered with a note. I saw at once that it was in Miss Cusack's handwriting, and tore it open with some apprehension. The contents were certainly startling. It ran as follows:

"I want your help. Serious developments. Meet me on Royal Exchange steps at nine this morning. Do not fail."

After breakfast I sent for a cab, and drove at once to the city, alighting close to the Bank of England. The streets were thronged with the usual incoming flux of clerks hurrying to their different offices. I made my way across to the Royal Exchange, and the first person I saw was Miss Cusack standing just at the entrance. She turned to me eagerly.

"This is good of you, doctor; I shall not forget this kindness in a hurry. Come quickly, will you?"

We entered the throng, and moved rapidly down Bartholomew Lane into Throgmorton Street; then, turning round sharp to the left, found ourselves in Lennox Court.

I followed my guide with the greatest curiosity, wondering what could be her plans. The next moment we entered a house, and, threading our way up some bare, uncarpeted stairs, reached the top landing. Here Miss Cusack opened a door with a key which she had with her, pushed me into a small room, entered herself, and locked the door behind us both. I glanced around in some alarm.

The little room was quite bare, and here and there round the walls were the marks of where office furniture had once stood. The window looked out on to the backs of the houses in Lennox Court.

"Now we must act quickly," she said. "At 9.30 an important cable will reach Mr. Hamilton's office. This room in which we now find ourselves is next door to Mr. Gildford's office in the next house, and is between that and Mr. Hamil-

ton's office two doors further down. I have rented this room—a quarter's rent for one morning's work. Well, if I am successful, the price will be cheap. It was great luck to get it at all."

"But what are you going to do?" I queried, as she proceeded to open the window and peep cautiously out.

"You will see directly," she answered; "keep back, and don't make a noise."

She leant out and drew the ends of her boa along the little ledge that ran outside just below the window. She then drew it in rapidly.

"Ah, ha! do you remember that, Dr. Lonsdale?" she cried softly, raising the boa to my face.

I started back and regarded her in amazement.

"Valerian!" I exclaimed. "Miss Cusack, what is this strange mystery?"

She raised her hand.

"Hush! not another word yet," she said. Her eyes sparkled with excitement. She rapidly produced a pair of very thick doe-skin gloves,

put them on, and stood by the window in an attitude of the utmost alertness. I stood still in the middle of the room, wondering whether I was in a dream, or whether Miss Cusack had taken leave of her senses.

The moments passed by, and still she stood rigid and tense as if expecting something. I watched her in wonderment, not attempting to say a word.



KEEP BACK AND DON'T MAKE A NOISE, SAID MISS CUSACK

We must have remained in this extraordinary situation fully a quarter of an hour, when I saw her bend forward, her hand shot out of the window, and with an inconceivably rapid thrust she drew it back. She was now grasping by the back of the neck a large tabby cat; its four legs were drawn up with claws extended, and it was wriggling in evident dislike at being captured.

"A cat!" I cried, in the most utter and absolute bewilderment.

"Yes, a cat, a sweet pretty



"'IN HENRY LE MARCHANT'S HANDWRITING,' SHE CRIED. 'WHAT A SCOUNDREL! WE HAVE HIM NOW!'"

cat, too; aren't you, pussy?" She knelt down and began to stroke the creature, who changed its mind and rubbed itself against her in evident pleasure. The next moment it darted towards her fur boa and began sniffing at it greedily. As it did so Miss Cusack deftly stripped off a leather collar round its neck. A cry of delight broke from her lips as, unfastening a clasp that held an inner flap to the outer, and after covering, she drew out a slip of paper.

"In Henry Le Marchant's handwriting," she cried. "What a scoundrel! We have him now."

"Henry Le Marchant's handwriting." I exclaimed, bending over the slip as she held it in her hand.

"Yes," she answered; "see!"

I read with bated breath the brief communication which the tiny piece of paper contained. It was beyond doubt a replica of the telegram which must have arrived at Hamilton's office a few moments ago. Miss Cusack also read the words. She flung the piece of paper to the ground. I picked it up.

"We must keep this, it is evidence," I said.

"Yes," she answered, "but this has upset me. I have heard of some curious methods of communication, but never such a one as this before. It was the wildest chance, but thank God it has succeeded. We shall save Evelyn from marrying a man with whom her life would have been intolerable."

"But what could have led you to this extraordinary result?" I said.

"A chain of reasoning starting on the evening when we dined together," she replied. "What puzzled me was this: What had Henry Le Marchant to do with Valerian on his handkerchief? It was that fact which set me thinking. His explanation of using it as a nerve sedative was so obviously a lie on the face of it, and his embarrassment

was so evident, that I did not trouble myself with this way out of the mystery for a single moment. I went through every conceivable hypothesis with regard to Valerian, but it was not till I looked up its properties in a medical book that the first clue came to me. Valerian is, as you of course know, doctor, a plant which has a sort of intoxicating, almost maddening effect on cats, so much so that they will search out and follow the smell

to the exclusion of any other desire. They are an independent race of creatures, and not easily trained like a dog. Then the amazing possibility suggested itself to me that the method employed by Mr. Le Marchant to communicate with Mr. Gildford, which has nonplussed every detective in London, was the very simple one of employing a cat.

"Come to the window and I will explain. You see that narrow ledge along which our friend pussy strolled so leisurely a moment ago. It runs, as you perceive, straight from Mr. Hamilton's office to that of Mr. Gildford. All Mr. Gildford had to do was to sprinkle some valerian along the ledge close to his own window. The peculiar smell would be detected by a cat quite as far off as the house where Mr. Hamilton's office is. I thought this all out, and, being pretty sure that my surmises were correct, I called yesterday on Henry Le Marchant at the office with the express purpose of seeing if there was a cat there.

"I went with a message from Evelyn. Nestling on his knee as he sat at his table writing in his private room was this very animal. Even then, of course, there was no certainty about my suspicions, but in view of the event which hung upon them—namely, his marriage to Evelyn—I was determined to spare no pains or trouble to put them to the test. I have done so, and, thank God, in time. But come, my course now is clear. I have a painful duty before me, and there is not a moment to lose."

As Miss Cusack spoke she took up her fur boa, flicked it slowly backwards and forwards to remove the taint of the valerian, and put it round her neck.

Five minutes later we were both communicating her extraordinary story to the ears of one of the sharpest detectives in London. Before that night Henry Le Marchant and James Gildford were both

arrested; and Miss Cusack, excited, worn out, her eyes blazing and her hands trembling, went to poor Evelyn Dudley's home to tell her the result of her day's work. The particulars of that interview she never confided even to me. But the next week she and Evelyn left the country to spend a long winter in the South of France.

Henry Le Marchant and Gildford were convicted of conspiracy to defraud, and



THE CAT NESTLED ON HIS KNEE AS HE SAT AT HIS TABLE

were condemned to suffer the severest punishment that the law prescribes in such cases.

But why follow their careers any further? Evelyn's heart very nearly broke, but did not quite, and I am glad to be able to add that she has married a man in every respect worthy of her.



A GUILTY STORY

BY L. T. MEADE AND ROBERT L. STACE

Illustrated by Fred T. Potter

ON a certain short afternoon in November 1893, I arrived home rather early. As I entered the hall my servant told me that someone was waiting to see me, and had been waiting for an hour.

"What name?" I asked.

"Mr. Reid, sir."

I had known Mr. James Reid for several years. He was a person of some importance, and had been senior partner in the great house of Reid, Dundas, and Co., bankers, of Lombard Street, but had retired from active business within the last year, as, after a severe attack of rheumatic fever, he had developed a serious heart affection. He often came to consult me, and I regarded his state as precarious, and had even told him that if he over-exerted himself or received a severe shock he might die suddenly.

"I am sorry you have had to wait so long, Mr. Reid," I said; "now, what can I do for you?"

"It is not about myself I have come to consult you, Lonsdale," he answered, "it is about my wife. I have been for some time extremely anxious about her, and I want you, if possible, to come down to-morrow to Lakewood in order to see her."

"I am sorry to hear she is unwell," I answered; "what is wrong?"

"That is what I want you to discover," he replied. "I cannot tell you how worried I am about her. She eats scarcely anything, stays awake nearly the whole night, wanders about restlessly in the day-

time, and is getting dreadfully thin and worn. You would scarcely know her for the same fresh, happy, handsome girl you saw at the time of my illness."

"I am truly sorry you have such a bad report to give," I answered. "Have you any idea as to the cause of this change?"

"Absolutely none. As far as I can tell, she suffers from no complaint, and yet something is worrying her to the brink of the grave. She is young and strong, and has a good constitution. What possible physical disease, which apparently makes no sign, could yet bring about such an appalling and sudden change is what I want you, Lonsdale, to discover."

Reid spoke with great earnestness, and with pain in his voice.

"It sounds more like some mental trouble," I said; "but, of course, I can say nothing until I see her."

"Mental!" he ejaculated with a start. "What do you mean? Her family is as clear of that taint as my own."

"You misunderstand me," I said; "I mean, by mental, some kind of worry or anxiety."

"But what worry could she have? She should not have a care in the world. She has everything that money can give her. I deny her nothing. I am, as you know, a rich man, and her slightest wish is granted. Sometimes I think that I have been over-indulgent as regards money. I hardly dare say how much I have given her in this one year alone. Well,

Lonsdale, you will believe me, I am sure, when I say that I would give all my fortune to restore her to health and happiness again."

"Has any other medical man seen her?" I asked.

"No; she refused point blank to see anyone, and hence arises my chief difficulty. I was just coming to that point. I want you to visit us as if you were merely a guest, and while you are with us try to gain her confidence, and, at the same time, watch her and form your opinion. I feel certain you will be able to discover what is really wrong."

"But my practice!" I exclaimed, in some astonishment. "I cannot leave it just now, though I am much obliged to you for inviting me to come and stay with you."

He bent forward and touched me on my arm.

"Money is no object," he said; "ask me what fee you like."

"I will at any rate come to-morrow, and if I find I can get someone to take a few of my bad cases, I will stay with you for a few days with pleasure."

"Thank you," he said, rising; "I quite see your position; you can do no more."

I conducted him to the door, and he wrung my hand warmly at parting.

It was easy to see that he was much upset, and he was in no condition to bear a mental strain just then.

Full of curiosity and somewhat excited, I arrived on the following morning at Lakewood. My host met me in the hall.

"This is good of you, Lonsdale," he said; "come into the drawing-room. My wife is there now, and"—he lowered his voice—"don't make any remarks about her health; act as if you did not notice the change in her."

"You can trust me," I replied.

As we entered the room I saw Mrs. Reid standing on the hearth. The day was a cold one, and a bright fire burned in the grate. She turned as I approached, and came forward to meet me. I suppressed all signs of any special interest as I took her hand, but nevertheless I was truly shocked at her appearance. Her face, always pale, was now almost transparent, and her eyes, which had been remarkable for their vivacity and brightness, were nearly lustreless. Even the rich crimson silk she wore scarcely brightened her sombre impression of illness and languor.

"So you have come to pay us a visit at last, Dr. Lonsdale," she said. "I am afraid you will not find us very gay. It is dull in the country, but perhaps the quiet will suit you after town. I always find town exhausting, don't you?"

In a few moments lunch was announced. It was not a pleasant meal. Had I been a guest merely, I felt I should have been even uncomfortable, owing to the loss of control exhibited by my hostess. Her movements were hurried, and as she raised a glass of wine to her lips her hand trembled so much that she spilt half of it. She would start, too, at the slightest noise, and even at the entrance of the servants.

"Well, Lonsdale," said my friend, as we were smoking afterwards, "tell me what you think of her."

"I am very glad I came," I replied. "Frankly, Reid, I do not like your wife's condition. She is certainly in a serious state of health, and the cause I cannot guess; but you can depend upon my doing my best to get to the bottom of this mystery, and I will not leave you till I have come to a definite opinion."

"Thanks a thousand times," he replied. "I feel a great sense of rest and comfort now you are in the house. I am sorry that I must leave you this afternoon. Will you amuse yourself in any way you like best?"

I left him, as he had business to transact, and went for a walk round the grounds in order to thrash out the strange problem before me. Little did I dream of how swiftly I should learn the terrible truth, and also all that truth's extraordinary sequel.

The next morning when I came down I was somewhat surprised to find Mrs. Reid in the breakfast-room, as I thought, in her weak condition, she would scarcely rise early. I had just said good morning, when her husband entered, nodded to me, and began to open a little pile of letters on his plate. One of them I noticed had a foreign stamp on the envelope.

Mrs. Reid, who was pouring out tea, kept looking from time to time at her husband. Her face wore a very anxious and nervous expression.

"A letter from Cardwell, dear," he said, presently. "He says he is returning home next week, much sooner than he expected, as he has finished his business."

"Mr. Cardwell coming home next week!" she exclaimed, in a voice which

she was evidently trying to keep calm. She turned deadly white. She put down her cup, took up a piece of toast which she broke into fragments without attempting to eat anything, and finally, uttering some trivial excuse, she left the room.

I glanced at Reid.

"Isn't it dreadful?" he said; "she is simply all to pieces. You must do something for her, Lonsdale. What can be the matter?"

He had evidently not connected his wife's

Do you allude to Frank Cardwell of the Foreign Office? If so, I know him well."

"No," he answered; "the man I have just heard from is Sir Walter Cardwell; he is a great friend of mine. I do all his business for him, being his banker. He and my wife have always enjoyed each other's company, and I thought it would cheer her up to know that he was returning to England."

At this moment the door of the breakfast-

room was quickly opened, and Mrs. Reid's maid appeared. She looked alarmed, and her face was white.

"Will you



strange behaviour with the words he had himself just uttered. But I had observed her change of colour, and wondered if I was really beginning to get the clue into my hands.

"You must give me time," I said, aloud. "I think I am just beginning to understand a little of her case. By the bye, I heard you mention that a certain man of the name of Cardwell was coming back.

come up at once, sir?" she said, turning to Reid. "My mistress has fainted and I cannot bring her to."

"Follow me, won't you, Lonsdale?" said my host.

I sprang to my feet, and with fear at my heart followed Reid quickly upstairs.

Mrs. Reid lay upon a sofa in her room. Her face was the colour of death, and just for a moment I feared the very worst. I applied the usual restoratives, and in a few moments, to my relief, she opened her eyes. As consciousness returned they wore an expression of almost abject terror.

"Is that you, Dr. Lonsdale?" she said. She held out her hand and suddenly grasped mine. "You look kind," she continued; "I was studying your face last

night. I am in terrible trouble. I should like to speak to you at once alone. James, do you mind leaving me with Dr. Lonsdale for a little? He is a medical man, and—and may be able to help me."

Shocked and startled though he was, I saw an expression of almost relief on Reid's face; for, thinking that his wife's trouble was physical, he thought she was going to confide it to me.

As soon as ever we were alone she asked for brandy.

"I must control myself," she said, "and I must get some strength back. I have something to tell you. I am going through a trouble which is killing me—yes, killing me, Dr. Lonsdale. I have made up my mind to trust you. You must help me. If you cannot, if you can do nothing at all, I shall take my life. I am in the most awful trouble. I am—" her voice sank to a whisper—"I am in extreme danger of being arrested. I am a felon."

Here she paused; her lips had trembled so much as she got out the latter word that it was with difficulty I could understand what she meant.

"I am a felon," she repeated; "a felon." She paused.

I held some more brandy to her lips. She took a sip, and continued.

"Unknown to my husband, my kind husband, I have been speculating and gambling—it is a passion with me. I can as little help it as a drunkard can help taking wine. Three months ago I lost over one thousand pounds on the Stock Exchange. I dared not ask my husband for so large a sum. He is generous enough to give me anything, but he could not understand what is the madness of my life. Instead of consulting him I went to a man whom I heard of in the city. His name was Richley. I had no security. I forged my husband's name to a bill, and by degrees paid it off. Then I thought all was safe, and I demanded back the bill. But no; the villain still held it, and demanded another thousand pounds. He said that he had discovered that the signature to the bill was a forgery, and that he would expose me to my husband if I refused to pay. I was desperate. I could not pay. A fortnight ago I went to my husband's safe in this house, and took from it some bonds he is keeping for Sir Walter Cardwell, the man who is returning to England next week. Dr. Lonsdale, next week all will be discovered. Had he postponed his return for

a fortnight I might have redeemed the bonds. Now it is hopeless. Oh, my God! what am I to do?"

She ceased speaking, and for a moment I felt absolutely stunned, and scarcely able to realise the meaning of her confession. I thought less of her than of her husband.

"What am I to do?" she repeated. "Have you no advice to give? I have ventured to confide in you because you look so kind."

"If what you tell me is really true," I said, gravely, "there is only one course for you to follow. You must tell your husband the absolute truth, and without delay."

"I dare not do so, I will not do so, and I forbid you to tell him. You know he has a serious heart affection. Any shock might kill him. He must not know. Long before now I might have ventured to confide in him, but with the knowledge which you yourself so impressed upon me, that he must have no shock, that any shock might end his days, I dared not do so."

"It is true," I replied. "Oh, why, Mrs. Reid, did you act in that mad way?"

"Why does the drunkard drink?" she answered. "Why does the victim of morphia take the drug which kills him? My passion is for gambling, and when I have it on me I have no control over myself."

I was silent. I had never felt more puzzled in the whole course of my life.

"You must tell me some way out of this terrible business. I cannot and will not ruin my husband's happiness. You will help me for his sake, will you not? for you are his friend. You would not like his death to lie at my door?"

Never in the whole course of my professional career had I come face to face with a more terrible situation. Mrs. Reid was right. Such a shock as the news she had just confided in me would produce upon Reid might cause his death.

"What latitude for action do you give me in the matter?" I asked, at last.

I spoke sternly, for I could feel little pity for the wretched woman.

"I give you all latitude, except that you don't tell my husband. You must get me out of this terrible situation."

"What is the address of the money lender?" I asked, producing my notebook.

"George Richley, 13, Rafford Court, Cornhill."

I wrote it down, and left the room. I had already determined what to do. I knew if

there was one person in the world who would suggest a solution, that person was my old friend Miss Cusack. To her I would go, and at once. I saw Reid downstairs. He was full of anxiety. I managed to invent a story which I hope satisfied him.

"Your wife's case necessitates my leaving for town immediately," I said. "I must beg of you to trust me, Reid, for although I hope to give her relief, your knowing the truth at present would retard matters considerably."

I spoke as cheerfully as I could, and I saw that he made an effort to be cheerful, although his manner was terribly downcast.

"Poor fellow," I could not help murmuring under my breath, "however hard I try he may have to know the truth before long. Still, if any human being can save the situation, Miss Cusack is that person."

On reaching town I drove at once to my friend's house, and as I did so speculated as to whether she would resent my coming and asking her. For no one else but my old friend Reid would I have done it. Miss Cusack had once said to me—

"Dr. Lonsdale, if at any time my services, such as they are, can be of use to you—that is, in the cause of right do not hesitate to come to me. My mission in life is to do good in my own way."

These words now rang in my ears. But was this in the cause of right? Was it not right and just to all concerned to deliver a woman like Mrs. Reid over to justice? Nevertheless, for her husband's sake, I would save her.

Telling my cabman to wait, I ran up the steps and rang the bell. The servant told me Miss Cusack was in, and the next moment I was shown into her presence.

"I am so glad to see you again," she said, smiling.

"I hope you are well," I replied.

"Yes, thank you. I have had a long rest from my special work. I feel at the present moment that I could do anything."

"I am delighted to hear you say so, Miss Cusack, for I have come to ask for your help and also your advice in a matter which concerns the happiness of a great friend of mine, Mr. James Reid."

"Mr. Reid the banker?"

"Yes, do you know him? His wife is in great trouble, and I have come to ask if you can suggest any way of helping me to get her out of it."

"What are the particulars?"

As Miss Cusack spoke she leant back in her chair, and taking up a tortoise-shell



I AM IN
EXTREME
DANGER
OF BEING AR-
RESTED
I AM A FELON,
SHE SAID

paper-knife, played with it as I told her my story.

"That is the situation," I said, when I had come to the end. "What do you think of it? Is there any conceivable way in which the scoundrel Richley can be got to deliver up these bonds which Mrs. Reid has stolen without the horror of a public exposure, which, in his present state, will doubtless kill her husband?"

"Are you sure of that?" she asked.

"I am almost sure. Reid's life hangs on a thread. Any shock might put an end to matters as far as he is concerned. I persuaded him to retire from business for that very reason."

"Then things are serious indeed," was

her reply. "Of course Richley's game must be stopped at once. Give me his address. This is Thursday. Sir Walter Cardwell returns to England next Wednesday, you say. I have therefore five clear days. At present I hold out no hope whatever. It is not a pleasant business, and were Richley not a blackmailer, the vilest of all vile people, nothing would induce me to have anything to do with it, for frankly I cannot sympathise with Mrs. Reid. But leave me now, please; my time is short."

Little did I estimate the resources of that marvellous woman. The following afternoon a messenger brought me a note. It ran as follows:—

"Go down to Lakewood and bring Mrs. Reid back to town. Have her at my house at three o'clock to-morrow without fail. Tell her husband it is a medical consultation, and that relief is in store for her. Don't fail."

I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own eyes as I read this note. A subtle scheme was in train, I had not the slightest doubt.

On the following day I reached Lakewood by an early train. Reid was fortunately out when I arrived, but his wife was in. She ran into the hall as she heard my voice. In a few moments I had explained my mission.

"You are to come and see a friend of mine; one who may possibly, and I am inclined to think will, help you," I said. "It will be necessary to tell your husband that you are going to town with me for a medical consultation."

She overwhelmed me with thanks. I now went into the grounds, where I met Reid, and there I at once told him that in order to effect a cure for his wife's nervous trouble an interview with a leading medical man in London was essential, for which I had made an appointment for three o'clock.

The poor fellow's gratitude and delight were almost more than I could bear.

"A thousand thanks," he whispered to me, as Mrs. Reid and I were leaving half an hour later. "I sincerely hope that all will be well."

"I feel sure it will," I replied, with emphasis.

Mrs. Reid and I spoke little on our way to town. I was not inclined for conversation, nor could I give her my opinion as to the result of our interview with Miss Cusack.

"Where are we going?" she asked of me once.

"To the house of a lady who is a great friend of mine, one whom I can trust," I answered.

She pouted and looked dissatisfied. I turned away, not feeling inclined to humour her. Punctually at three o'clock we reached Miss Cusack's house, and were instantly shown into her drawing-room. My excitement and curiosity to know what was going to happen were intense.

Miss Cusack came to meet us. She was dressed becomingly, and I never saw her look brighter or more handsome.

"How do you do?" she said, bowing in a distant way to Mrs. Reid, and then turning to me.

"You are both in good time," she said. "I have only to beg of you both, and you in especial, madam, not to interrupt me in what I am about to do. Show no astonishment and dissatisfaction, I beg of you. Rest assured that all will be well."

She had scarcely uttered these words before the door of the room was flung open and the butler announced Mr. George Richley.

Mrs. Reid smothered a low cry, and shrank back as if in uncontrollable terror, and I own I was almost as much astonished.

Mr. Richley, a fairly good-looking, middle-aged man, bowed to each of us. Miss Cusack motioned him to a chair.

"Now," she said, in her brisk, incisive manner, "the business which brings us four together is easily explained. I understand, sir," she continued, turning to Richley, "that you possess bonds value two thousand pounds belonging to this lady, Mrs. Reid, of Lakewood, in Surrey, and also a bill supposed to be signed by her husband. What value do you place on these two properties?"

"Ten thousand pounds," he answered, insolently.

"And you have them with you?"

"I have."

"Then please hear what I have to propose. Without any reference to the detestable trade you are practising, sir, are you prepared to deliver up those bonds and that bill on certain conditions?"

"I will listen to the conditions, madam, before I make any further reply," was his answer.

"To raise so large a sum at once is, of course, impossible," she continued. "I

propose, therefore, to give you a written agreement, signed by myself and duly attested, to pay you the money in ten monthly instalments of a thousand pounds each."

"Miss Cusack!" I cried, unable to repress myself, "I cannot believe this." She was actually out of her own pocket going to perform this colossal act of charity for one who so little deserved it.

"I cannot and will not countenance the transaction," I continued, boldly. "Mrs. Reid, have you nothing to say?" I turned hotly as I spoke to the cowardly creature beside me.

"Hush!" cried Miss Cusack, "remember

"Kindly witness this, Dr. Lonsdale," she said, motioning me to her side.

There was nothing to be done but to obey.

"Now give me the bonds and the bill," she said, turning to Richley, who produced them from his pocket.

Miss Cusack, still holding her agreement in her hand, permitted him to read it.

"That will do," he said, and the next moment the exchange had taken place, and Miss Cusack rang the bell.



"THE BUTLER ANNOUNCED MR. GEORGE RICHLEY"

you have promised not to interfere. Do you accept my offer, Mr. Richley? You have, I presume, found my bankers' reference satisfactory?"

The man's eyes gleamed with avaricious triumph.

"I have, madam," he replied, "and I accept your offer."

Once again I tried to protest, but was silenced by Miss Cusack, who sat down at her writing table and began to write.

"Go," she said, sternly, and bowing obsequiously to each of us in turn he left the room, the butler following him.

For a moment I sat literally stunned and incapable of speaking, for I had no words to express my gratitude at her magnificent act. She flung the bill on the flames and quietly handed the bonds to Mrs. Reid, who took them, muttering broken words of thanks.

"You can go also," she said, "and I

recommend you, madam, to take this as a lesson. You can tell your husband you are cured."

Mrs. Reid glanced at me. Her whole face was changed. The look of cowardice had left it—it beamed brightly.

"You have given me back my life and reason," she said; "I shall thank God for what you have done to the latest day of my life."

"And now let me at least hear that you have learned your lesson," said Miss Cusack, gently. "Avoid gambling as you would hell fire. Go, Dr. Lonsdale, I want to have a word with you when you have seen Mrs. Reid into her carriage."

I accompanied my friend's wife downstairs, saw her into her carriage, and came back to Miss Cusack.

"What can I say to you?" I began.

She interrupted me with a low laugh. I stared at her with amazement.

"You really think I am going to pay that ten thousand pounds?" she asked.

"He can sue you in any court of law if you do not," I replied; "that document is perfectly legal; you must know that."

"It is legal now," she replied; "but it won't be long."

"How? Why?" I cried. "Do you mean to say you are going to destroy it? But he will never allow it to get into your hands again."

"It will destroy itself long before the first instalment is due," was her answer.

"Dr. Lonsdale, I am not over-scrupulous in dealing with blackmailers. Come, the whole thing is simple enough. See here."

She raised the ink-stand on her secretaire.

"Sympathetic ink," I almost shouted.

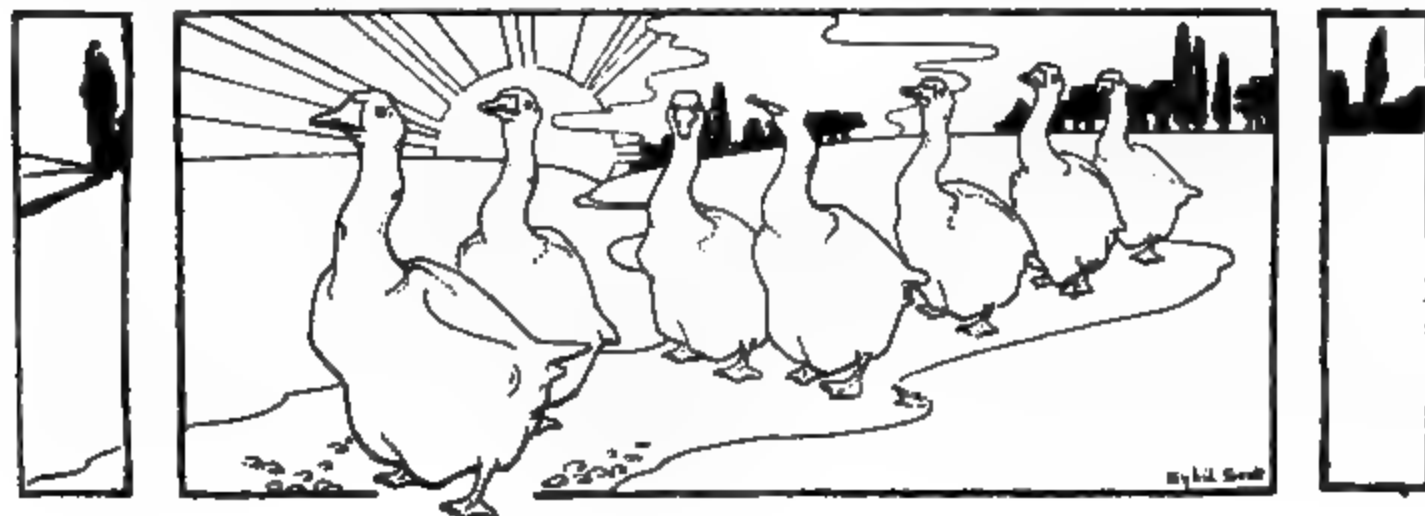
"Yes, but something very refined and

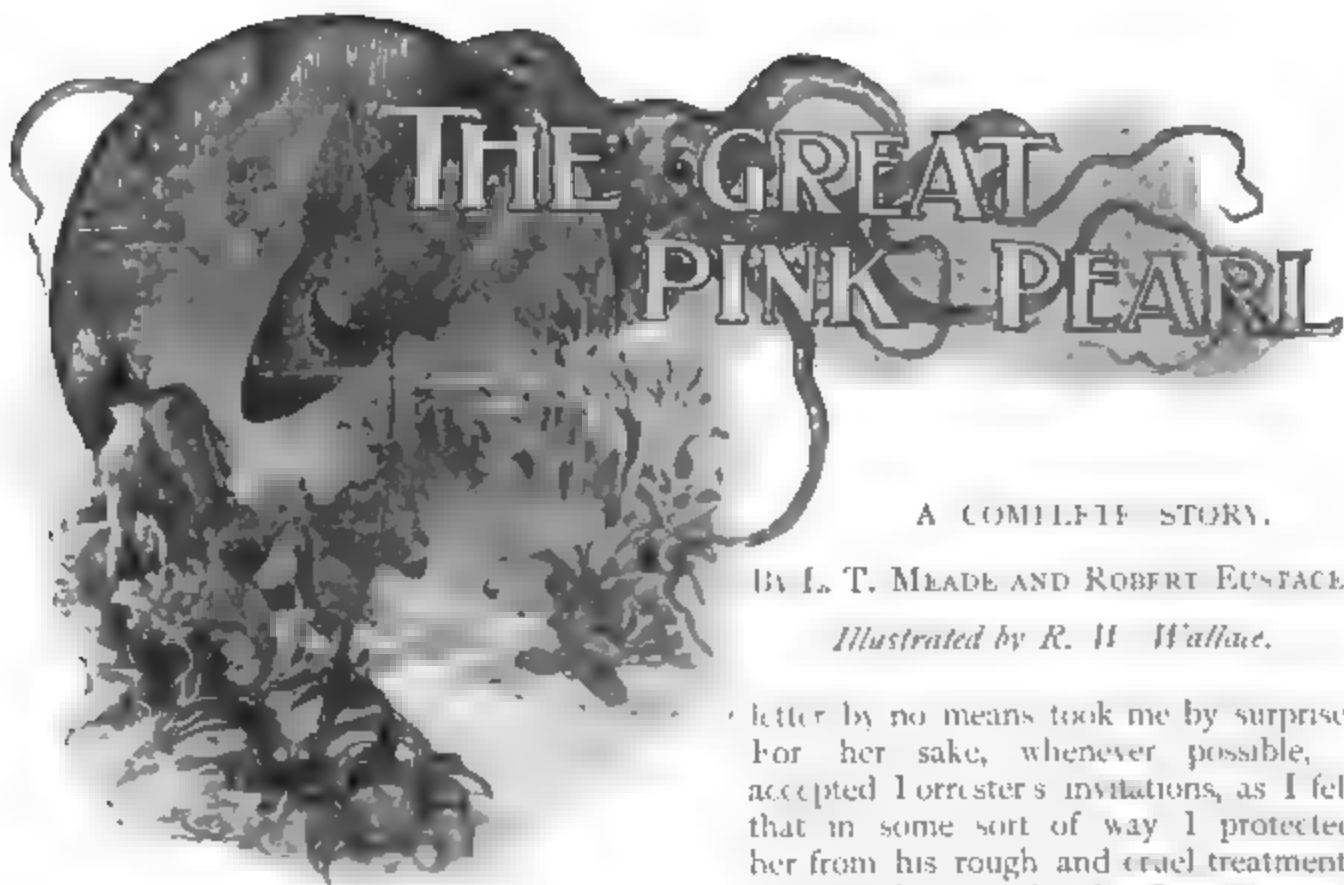
out of the ordinary in that line; a preparation of my own; a particular method of preparing iodide of starch in aqueous solution. It looks like, apparently, the best blue-black ink of the trade, and in less than three weeks not a letter will be visible, nor can any possible method restore it. That document which Mr. Richley took away with him will long before the month is up be a blank sheet of paper."

"Miss Cusack!" I cried, "you are too wonderful. Nothing could have been more subtle. You are marvellous."

"Not at all," she replied, calmly; "I only use what brains nature has given me for my own purposes. I felt absolutely justified in doing what I have just done. I went to Richley yesterday and made the appointment. Of course he agreed to meet me here, and I referred him first to my bankers, to whom I also wrote, instructing them to inform him fully of my means. You see yourself how completely I threw dust in his eyes. I apparently put myself absolutely into his hands. He saw how I should be at his mercy by giving him the document which he carried away with him. When he does not receive his cheque in a month's time he will get out that sheet of paper, and then—— I leave the rest to your imagination, Dr. Lonsdale. He will come to see me, of course, and if he annoys me I shall summon him. He can do nothing. His talons are clipped, for he cannot move an inch in the matter."

The rest of this story is quickly told. Mrs. Reid got quite well. Her crime was apparently buried in oblivion, and Reid to this day believes that his wife is one of the most innocent and perfectly delightful women who ever lived.





A COMPLETE STORY.

BY L. T. MEADE AND ROBERT EUSTACE.

Illustrated by R. H. Wallace.

ON the 5th of October, in the year 1896, I received, on returning from my morning round of visits, the following letter:—

24A, Bayswater Gardens, W.

Dear Dr. Lonsdale,

Will you give us the pleasure of your company to dinner to-morrow at eight o'clock? Mr. Tempest, who has quite recovered from his late illness, is staying with us, and I know would much like to see you.

Yours very truly,
ELLA FORRESTER.

Ella was the only daughter of a patient of mine, Ralph Forrester, a precious stone merchant of some fame, but whose speciality was in the pearl trade. I had personally no liking for the man. Though I had no direct evidence against him, certain rumours from time to time had reached my ears that in his dealings with others he was utterly unscrupulous, but perhaps the real reason of my dislike lay in the fact that he treated his motherless daughter in a rough and heartless manner.

Ella was a pretty and charming girl of about nineteen years of age. I had attended her during her childish illnesses, and she and I were always great friends. For some reason also Forrester seemed to take a certain pleasure in my society. He often confided some of his troubles to me, and let me into one or two of the secrets of his trade. I was a constant guest at their house, and Ella's

letter by no means took me by surprise. For her sake, whenever possible, I accepted Forrester's invitations, as I felt that in some sort of way I protected her from his rough and cruel treatment.

I was glad to see also that I was to meet my friend Tempest. I had long ago learned the great secret of his life. He loved Ella Forrester, and I felt sure the attachment was reciprocal. Tempest was a nice fellow of about thirty years of age, a Colonial by birth. He had spent much of his early years in pearl fishing on the coral reefs off the Queensland coast. In this rôle Forrester had employed him several times with great success.

Eighteen months before this story opens he had gone out on a pearling expedition on Forrester's behalf. Early in the year I was told that Cyril Tempest had met with an accident. Particulars of this accident had not reached me. Whatever it was no doubt I should hear all about it the following evening, and I at once accepted Ella's invitation, and presented myself in due course at Bayswater Gardens.

As I entered the room Forrester and Ella both came forward. The latter greeted me warmly. As I shook hands with her I could not help noticing that her face did not wear its accustomed look of vivacity. I also observed that she glanced nervously towards the door, and while I was still speaking to her I saw a curious expression of absolute repulsion cross her face.

Another visitor was announced, and the next moment I found myself introduced to a very vulgar-looking man of the name of Sutherland.

"Mr. Sutherland is one of my greatest friends, Lonsdale," said Forrester, who now came up and spoke in an effusive and almost disagreeable manner. "He accompanied Ella and myself on a charming cruise to Norway during the past summer. I have no doubt you will meet him again here."

Sutherland laughed loudly and glanced at Ella, and then turned away, accompanied by his host.

I looked again at the girl, who still remained near my side. Her face was now very white.

"You know that Mr. Tempest is staying with us," she said, in a low voice.

"Yes," I answered, "and I am glad he is home again, he will have many adventures to tell us."

Her face clouded.

"He has indeed had some thrilling experiences," she said. "He told us one this morning. Hark, I think that must be his ring."

Her eyes brightened and the colour returned to her face. The door was thrown open once more, and Mr. Tempest was announced.

I could not help being struck by the change in his appearance since I had last seen him.

Tempest smiled when he saw me, and a look of more than pleasure flitted across his face as he glanced at Ella.

"I am delighted to see you back again safe and sound," I said to him. "You must come and see me soon and tell me your adventures."

"I want to, Lonsdale, I want to see you badly," he said in a low voice.

"Come round to-night, then," I replied with a sudden impulse, as I noticed an anxious ring in his voice.

Dinner was announced, and a few moments later I found myself seated near Miss Forrester, with an elderly lady on my left hand and Mr. Sutherland exactly opposite. The conversation soon became animated, but I noticed that Ella Forrester took little or no part in it. Indeed, Sutherland completely claimed her attention. He was evidently trying to make himself pleasant to her, and she was forced to answer his somewhat pointed questions, and to listen to the anecdotes with which he tried to beguile the time.

Tempest, who was at the other end of the table, was, to my surprise, almost silent, although, as a rule, he was gay and bright and a good conversationalist. I began to

put two and two together, and came to the conclusion that Tempest had a rival in Sutherland, although there was not the least doubt that Ella Forrester greatly disliked the man.

After the ladies left the room and we had drawn our chairs closer to the fire, I perceived further, to my surprise, that the relations between Tempest and Forrester were by no means cordial. The elder man scarcely spoke to his guest, and when he did it was with a look and a few words of such pointed rudeness that I hated him more than I had ever done before, and vowed that, notwithstanding Ella's existence, this was the very last time I would enter his house.

The evening that followed was a dreary one, although Ella did her utmost to make it lively. Soon after eleven o'clock I rose to go, and Tempest followed my example.

"Well, old chap," I said, as we entered my brougham, "what is the matter with you? I never saw you so gloomy in my life. And as for Miss Forrester, she seems to have lost her old gaiety. Is there anything wrong?"

"There is," he replied gravely, "something very wrong, I am sorry to say, and I want to tell you about it. It is a long story, so I won't begin till we get to your house."

"I was afraid it was so," I answered, "I only trust it is nothing very bad."

My companion remained silent till we reached home. When we had settled ourselves in my smoking room he began—

"I don't believe anyone in this world has ever been in such a position as I am in now, but I will tell you the whole thing from beginning to end. You heard from Forrester that I had had an accident?"

"Ella told me about it," I answered, "but you seem to have got over it, whatever it may have been."

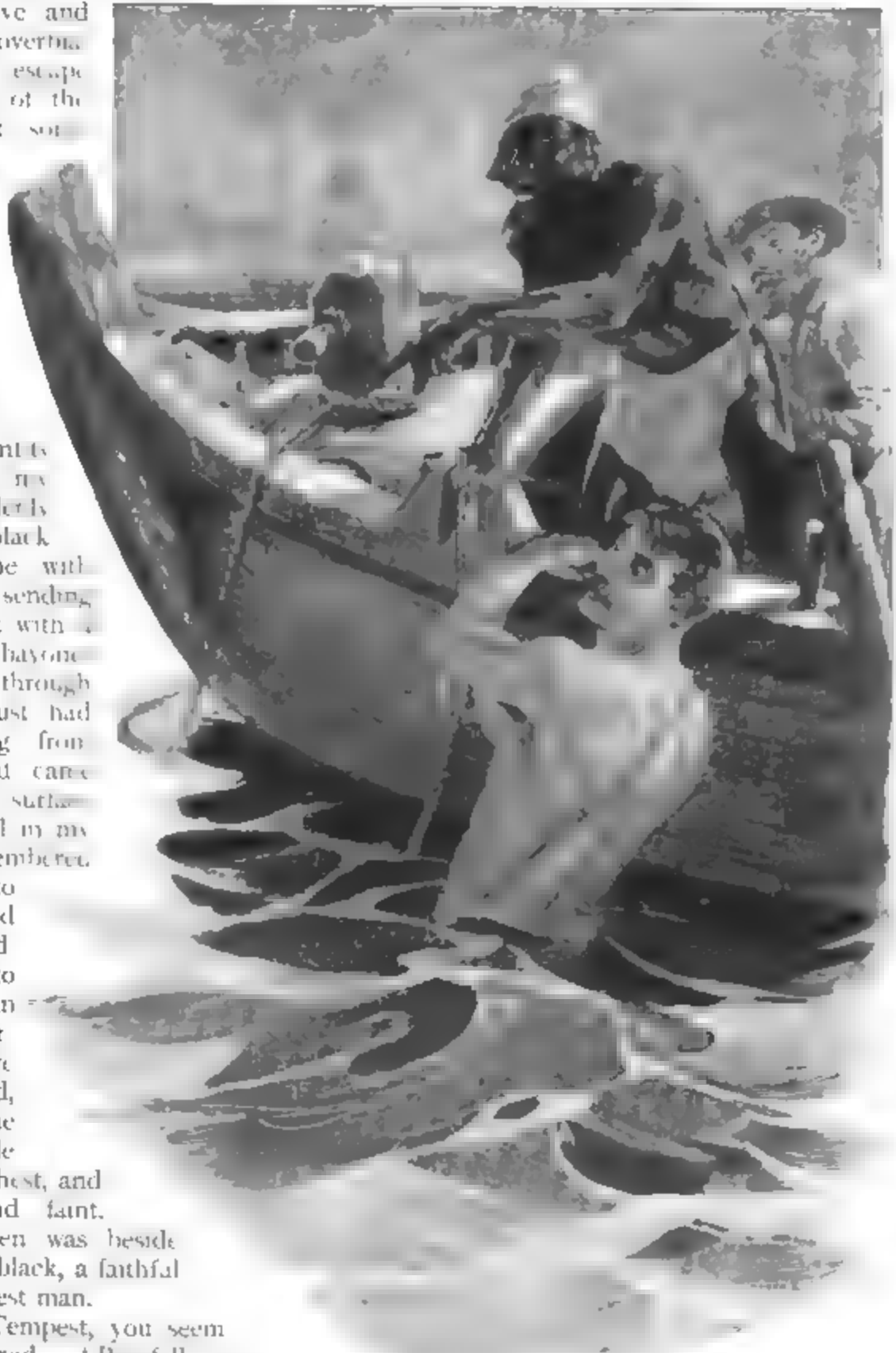
"I believe I have got over it as far as my health is concerned," he replied, "but other consequences have arisen on account of it which are far more difficult to cope with. It was a terrible experience, and, as my present story is a sequel to it, I will start right away. It was on the 18th of May this year that I was pearling on the coral reef off the Queensland coast, 150° by 20° rough bearings. It was late in the afternoon, and my Kanakas and I had been working in about five fathoms with fair success. We were just going to put back to the schooner

when I thought I would have one more dive. I had just got my foot on the sinker stone with the rope in my hand when one of the Kanakas touched my arm and pointed to a large dark fin that had shouldered up on the crest of a wave and then disappeared. Familiarity with sharks had, however, bred contempt. I determined to take my dive and trust to my proverbial good luck to escape the cruel teeth of the brute. I took some deep breaths, and the next instant was plunging down and down through the green waters to the coral fairy-land below. I had just collected a fair quantity of shells into my net when suddenly a huge rough black body struck me with terrific force, sending me reeling back with a blow as if a bayonet had been thrust through my back. I just had sense to spring from the bottom, and came in safety to the surface with the net still in my hand. I remembered being hauled into the boat, and then I fainted. When I came to I was back in the schooner. My clothes were soaked with blood, which had come from a terrible wound in my chest, and I felt sick and faint. One of my men was beside me, a half-caste black, a faithful fellow and my best man.

"Ha, Mr. Tempest, you seem better, eh," he cried. "Big fellow, shark I take it, hit you. Lucky dive, though, my word! Look here!"

"He opened his great hand as he spoke, and I gave a gasp when I saw what it contained. In the palm of his hand lay an enormous pink pearl of such splendid size and colour that I had never seen the like before in my life.

"You mean that I brought that up with



"THE MAN POINTED TO A LARGE DARK FIN THAT HAD SHOULDERS UP ON THE CREST OF A WAVE."

me?' I cried, as I took it into my hand. The man nodded.

"Holding it still in my hand, I fell back on my pillow, and an ecstatic wave of delight, in spite of the pain I was suffering, passed through me, for I knew that if I survived my fortune was made. At the lowest computation that pearl was worth thirty thousand pounds. Of course, it really belonged to Forrester, for whom I was working, but as my commission was always twenty per cent., I should have my winnings, and considerable they would be. How badly I was injured I could not tell, but I suddenly felt a wild desire to live, to bring the pearl home with me and marry Ella Forrester, whom, as you know, I have long loved devotedly. The first thing to get was surgical aid. This I knew was no easy matter. I sent for the skipper, an old German name Schiller, and told him to put in at once at Leuville Cove, when I would send for the doctor at the township some eight miles off.

"This was done, and I was carried ashore with the great pink pearl safe in my pocket, for I would trust it to no one. I felt more than anxious about it in my prostrate condition, for Leuville abounded with the lowest form of scoundrel, and the news of my great prize would quickly get abroad. I sent a messenger to the township to cable home the news of the great find to Forrester, and also to bring out the doctor. He came in a few hours.

"He was a young fellow, fresh from England and the London hospitals. I took a fancy to him at once, and, weak as I was, told him my story. I even shewed him the pink pearl.

"'You are in danger with that about you,' he said, 'where can you hide it?'

"'I will take care of the pearl for myself,' I replied; 'I shall not let it out of my grip you may be certain of that, but you must make me live.'

"'I will do my utmost for you,' he replied, and then he examined my chest with great skill and tenderness. He told me that the blow from the shark had considerably injured the breast bone, a portion of which was broken away and must be instantly removed. He had brought chloroform with him, said he would put me under its influence, and perform the operation at once. I was in fearful agony, and, you may be sure, did not wish for a moment's delay. Robertson, the young doctor, immediately set to work. He

put me under the influence of the anæsthetic, and I floated off into a delicious dream, in which I had a confused sense that I was leading Ella to the altar and that she was decked with pink pearls.

"Now comes the horrible part of my story. As I was coming to (you know how dazed one is at such times) I became conscious of a confused noise and loud cries. I remember the doctor bending over me, and I noticed a panic-stricken look on his pale face. He was saying something in a low and emphatic voice which I have never since been able to recall. I feel certain that if I could only recall those words they would solve all this terrible mystery and worry. The next instant the noise increased. There was the sound of a struggle, followed by a hoarse cry and a pistol shot outside the tent. I fought against my drowsy sensations, and, startled and terrified, raised myself. The doctor was nowhere to be seen. I struggled up and crawled out. You can imagine what my feelings were when I saw the dead body of poor young Robertson lying only a few feet from the tent door. He had been shot through the heart, doubtless in his efforts to save me from the attack of the scoundrels who wanted to rob me of my treasure.

"A moment later the old skipper was at my side. He helped me back to the tent, put me into bed, and gave me a restorative. He then told me that a party of pearlers had got wind of the great pink pearl and had attacked the tent. The doctor and he had both resisted them, the former losing his life in his attempt to save me and my new treasure, and afterwards the scoundrels had got clear away with the pearl.

"The old skipper's words stunned me. I tried to fancy that I was still under the influence of chloroform and that all this hideous story was but a terrible dream, but I soon discovered that it was only too true.

"For a fortnight I lay there raging in fever and impotent fury at my loss. Then, in spite of everything, I began to get better, and did what I could to trace the villains. All my efforts were useless, and in despair I returned to England, saw Forrester, and told him everything. Imagine my surprise when he said in the coldest, most sneering voice, that he did not believe a word of my story. He followed up this extraordinary sentence by continuing in the following words:

"'I not only refuse to believe what you have just told me, but I am certain you

have trumped up this story to cover your own theft. You are the thief who has stolen the great pink pearl.'

"I tried to argue that if such had been my intention I should never have cabed the news of having found it. He would listen to no reason, abused me like a pickpocket with the most insulting language, for which I should have struck him had it not been for Ella's sake. I know now how much he wanted that pearl, and how its possession would have saved him from the ruin which is threatening him. He refused to allow me to see Ella, but to this injustice I would not submit. When I was again aged to meet, I told her my entire story and of course she believed me. She even went further, she spoke to her father and told him that if I was refused admittance to the house she would also leave it and marry me. As she is of age, Forrester knew he could not prevent her.

" 'You can cut me off with a shilling,' said my brave girl, 'but I will not desert Cyril. I would rather be his wife than the wife of the richest man on earth' "



"A PARTY OF TRAILERS HAD GOT WIND OF THE GREAT PINK PEARL AND HAD ATTACKED THE TENT"

"Forrester, brute as he is, is more or less influenced by Ella. I believe his present hope is to induce her to marry that rich scoundrel whom you met there to-night, Sutherland. He hopes to effect this by guile, for in no other way could he get Ella to consent to it. Now

I am allowed there on sufferance, hence my appearance on the scene this evening. Here, now you have the whole situation, Lindsay.

What do you think of it?

"My dear fellow, I don't know what to think of it," I replied. "You must give me time to clearly take in your story. It is an extraordinary one. What an awful escape you had of your life! And then for your luck to end with all this misery and suspicion

is a bitter reward indeed! But as to the pearl, that seems to me to be the crucial point. What do you yourself think became of it?"

"That is the puzzle of all puzzles," he answered. "Personally, I distrust that skipper's story. I believe it was he who stole it; I believe also that he shot the doctor, who saw him take it, and then made up the story. He was a great rascal, I knew, but I could not get so good a man for my work, as he knew every inch of the Reef."

"But if the pearl was of such exceptional value and unique appearance, could it be disposed of in any market without comments on it leaking out?" I asked.

"No, certainly not, and that is also a very queer point. Of course, it is possible that some private deal might have been made. Any way, it is gone now, and I shall never see it again. There is no use crying over spilt milk. Ella is true to me, that is my one and only comfort; and if I could only persuade her to marry me, poor as I am, I believe I should have heart enough to leave the country and start afresh somewhere else. Luckily, I know all about the pearling business, and may come across another treasure on my own account."

Although his words were brave enough, there was a bitter ring in his voice. I looked at him and saw that to a great extent his spirit was broken.

"It is Forrester's suspicion of me which makes things so hard," he said, meeting my eyes. "Of course, I know only too well that the man is unscrupulous himself, but his attitude towards me is almost intolerable."

"Well, you have but to keep up your courage," I said, after a pause. "The girl is true to you, which is the main point. I grant that things look dark now, but you never know how quickly the cloud may lift. Forrester's accusation is, of course, infamous, and I would not dwell on it if I were you. I suppose you know best, but I think you should have spent more time in trying to regain that pearl, and I think still, granting what you say about its unique appearance, you should still make strenuous efforts to trace it. Surely it would not be impossible to pick up the thread again."

"You speak without knowledge," he answered testily, "I did everything that man could while on the spot. I spent a whole month's earnings in cables and enquiries. There was no use throwing more

good money after bad. The maddening thing is this, Lonsdale—I cannot recall those last words of poor young Dr. Robertson just as he bent over me in the tent. God only knows how I have tried to bring back that lost memory. Another moment and I should have been sufficiently conscious to have retained each word. I am absolutely certain that he was telling me about the pearl, because that was the word I could alone distinctly recall."

"Yes, it is indeed maddening," I answered. "Well, I can only give you the hackneyed advice not to give way, old chap. I am afraid I must ask you to leave me now, as I have to visit some patients, late as it is, but will you promise to come and dine with me at 7.30 to-morrow evening?"

"Yes," he replied, "I will with pleasure."

As soon as Tempest had gone, I went out to see my patient, an old man dying of paralysis in the next street. I returned soon after midnight, built up my fire, and sat down to think over the strange story which had been confided to me. It was curious enough, in all conscience.

"What tiny events and moments alter the whole current of affairs of a life," I thought. If Tempest could only recall the words whispered to him by the doctor as consciousness was struggling back all would, I felt certain, be explained. The mystery of the lost pearl would be made clear.

The more I thought over the circumstance, the more inclined I was to the belief that the scoundrel who had shot the doctor might not, after all, have discovered the pearl.

Tempest had heard certain words when returning to the world of sense after the unconsciousness produced by chloroform. Might a similar condition start the same train of thought, and automatically reproduce the words impressed on his brain by the doctor just before his death?

The more I thought over this the more it seemed feasible. I felt intensely excited as the possibility grew vividly before me. It was a subject upon which I had often thought, and apart from the tremendous issues which might depend upon the result, here was the very chance to try it.

I determined to think the matter over carefully, and, if I decided on attempting it, to broach the subject to Tempest the next evening.

The whole of the following day I was haunted by this thought, and definitely

determined to propose the experiment when my friend arrived. It was with some anxiety, therefore, I awaited his coming.

He arrived about a quarter to eight, and I went to the door myself to let him in. As I glanced at his face I saw that he had gone through a depressing day, and had doubtless not been able to persuade Ella Forrester to run away with him. His face was drawn and pale, and there were heavy rings round his eyes.

"It's all over, Lonsdale," he said, sinking into a chair and looking at the picture of despair.

"She has refused your suggestion then?" I said.
"Well, Tempest, I must confess I am scarcely

said, "I don't blame her, poor darling, she is driven to it. Her father is forcing her to marry Sutherland, and after months of opposition she is beginning to yield. She told me that her father absolutely went on his knees to her last night and implored of her to save him from ruin. What could a girl do under such circumstances?"

"Listen, Tempest," I said, "I have something to say to you. You must keep quiet. I do not believe all hope is over. Here is dinner.



"I AM HERE."
IN SCENE BY
THEOREM AND
J. K. ST. CL
MY INSTRUMENTS

surprised. I have known Ella for years, and I do not think she is the sort of girl willingly to desert her father, even for the man she loves.

His face relaxed into the ghost of a smile.

"She does love me, there is no doubt of that," he answered. Then he rose, the stern lines came back to his mouth and brow. He clenched one of his hands.

"My very worst fears are realised," he

said, "I don't blame her, poor darling, she is driven to it. Her father is forcing her to marry Sutherland, and after months of opposition she is beginning to yield. She told me that her father absolutely went on his knees to her last night and implored of her to save him from ruin. What could a girl do under such circumstances?"

"Listen, Tempest," I said, "I have something to say to you. You must keep quiet. I do not believe all hope is over. Here is dinner. Sit down and see whether a glass of this old Henrick won't smooth away some of those wrinkles from your face."

He approached the table, we sat down and dinner proceeded. By the time we had reached dessert I saw that Tempest had sufficiently regained his self-control for me to enter on the business which now occupied all my thoughts.

"I have a proposal to make to you, and I want your closest attention," I said.

"What is that?" he asked.

Then I began to unfold the idea I had formulated on the previous evening. I watched him closely as I spoke, noting the

effect of my words. At first he listened with a listless air, as if wondering why I was troubling him with a psychological theory that did not in the least interest him, but as I came to the point, and at last blurted out the naked fact that if he were once more put under the influence of chloroform the memory he was in vain struggling to grip might return, he started back, stared at me, his eyes dilated, and his lips parted in wonder.

"Do you mean it, Lonsdale?" he cried, "do you really think it possible; it sounds too good to be true."

"It is by no means impossible, my dear fellow," I answered. "Mind, I don't say for a moment it will be successful, but I tell you as a medical man I think it worth trying."

"Then try to-night, don't lose a moment, try now."

The sudden revulsion from despair to a possible hope had sent the colour to his cheeks. He was all on fire with excitement.

"There is no earthly reason why we should not try to-night," I said. "You have taken very little dinner, luckily. We will try within the next couple of hours. I have only one concession to ask on your part."

"What is that?"

"As there is always a very slight element of danger in the administration of chloroform, will you hand me a written note that the experiment is at your wish, and for the purpose stated?"

"Of course I will," he replied. He went straight over to the writing table, drew up a short note at my dictation, and signed it.

It was with the greatest difficulty I could restrain his impatience during the time that intervened between then and eleven o'clock, as I did not care to experiment sooner. At that hour I took him into my consulting room, told him to undo his collar and shirt and lie down on the sofa. I examined his chest with curiosity. I could see plainly what had been done. A piece of bone from the breast bone had been removed, and there was a scar.

His excitement certainly had infected me, and I lost no time in commencing the experiment. I administered the chloroform slowly, and he gradually sank under its influence. It was in the second stage, the stage of excitement, that I expected the result, if any, and I watched him passing into this with the utmost interest. His limbs began to move and his face to flush, and then his voice broke into incoherent words. I strained my

ears, listening intently. What was he saying? He was murmuring certain words over and over again, saying them thickly, monotonously; they sounded like a mere jumble.

I grew impatient and anxious, for I knew that this stage lasted but a minute. Then he became quieter, and I had abandoned all hope of success when, in a low murmur that dwindled almost to a whisper, yet with perfect distinctness, I caught the words—

"The pearl is safe in the wound. I have put it there for safety. It is your only chance."

The next instant I had snatched the chloroform from his face, and was standing motionless beside him, as the meaning of his words struck home. The pearl put for safety in the wound in his chest. Was it possible?

At first I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own ears. If, indeed, Tempest was uttering the truth, he had for months, ever since that fatal moment, carried the pink pearl always with him and yet not known it. In an instant of inspiration when the tent was attacked, the doctor must have dipped the pink pearl in his anæsthetic and slipped it into the cavity made by the wound, where it had remained without causing pain or giving any sign of its presence.

Such things had, I knew, been done experimentally with success. What news I had for him when he awoke, or would it not be better for me to go right on with matters now, push him again under the chloroform, open the wound in his chest, and finish the whole thing? Yes, I would do it.

I immediately continued the chloroform, and then quickly got out my instruments. Was I right in doing this single-handed? I determined to risk it. In less than five minutes my preliminary work was done, and in less than another minute my labour had its reward, and the pearl lay in my forceps on the table.

I rapidly completed the operation, put on the dressings, fixing them with a bandage, and then I sat down beside my patient and waited quietly till he should come round.

It is needless to add much more. The pink pearl was its own harbinger of peace, of success, of fortune.

Two months later Cyril Tempest married the girl he loved, severed his partnership with Forrester, and went away with her to Queensland. There he commenced his pearling operations on his own account with marked success, and writes to me that he is the happiest man in the world.

THE FACE IN THE DARK.

A POWERFUL SHORT STORY.

By L. T. MEADE and ROBERT EUSTACE.

Illustrated by SIDNEY PAGET.

I AM an unmarried man with sufficient means to support myself in a quiet way. I enjoy a bachelor's life, am fond of dabbling in literature, write occasionally for the Press, possess a fair knowledge of science, and produce the best photographs of any amateur that I know. I have no present intention of marrying, but I am by no means unsociable. I like the company of my fellow men, and go a good deal into society. My name is Laurence Hyne, and I am thirty-two years of age.

In these days of intense living no man who is not a confirmed hermit can shut himself away from strong situations, from moments of danger, or from hours when the world seems more or less to totter beneath him. I, like others, have had my due share of adventures of one sort and another, and the one I am about to tell was by no means the least curious of those that occurred to me.

On the 18th of a very hot June, I went to the reception of some friends of mine, the Sitwells, who lived in Berkeley Square. This was always a brilliant function, and I knew that I should meet many of my friends there. On this occasion there was one in particular, a young fellow of the name of Granby Manners, whom I particularly wished to shake once more by the hand. I had known him as a boy and as his mother had been my dearest and most valued friend, I took an interest in him. He was an open-handed, unselfish, clever lad, but was also one of the most nervous boys I had ever come across. His ideas were lofty and aspiring, but his nerves hampered him, and to such an extent that, when still quite a lad, not more than seventeen, he was ordered abroad, where he had resided under the care of a tutor ever since. Mrs. Manners had been a sort of elder sister to me—she had done me many good turns in life—had assisted me more than once, not only by her advice, but practically, and on her death-bed had charged me most emphatically to look after Granby, and if at any time I could do him a kindness not to hesitate, for her sake, to do it.

"He is ten years your junior, don't forget that, Laurence," she said. "He knows little or nothing of English life. When the estate comes to him he will be surrounded by adventurers—help him if you can."

I promised faithfully, and now the time had come, for Granby's mother and father were both dead—the boy inherited the old Croftwood estates, and had come home to attend to business matters.

On the day of the Sitwells' function I received a letter from Lady Willoughby, Granby's aunt. She wrote from Scotland.

"My nephew is in London," she wrote. "Pray find him out and write to me with regard to his appearance, his prospects, his present ideas of life. He was always a strange boy, and not at all a person to own a big estate like Croftwood Hall. I am unable to travel, as you know, but my dear sister told me on her death-bed that you had promised to be good to him. Pray do what you can and let me know."

Accordingly I went to the Sitwells primed in every way to see after young Manners. Mrs. Manners had had an unhappy life—her burden was a heavy one, so heavy that it had sent her to her grave before her time. The facts were these. Her husband was one of the worst of men—a drunkard, reckless, fast, extravagant. There were rumours of even darker vices—of deeds committed that ought never to have seen the light of day. Some people said that the man was half insane. Well, he was dead, and the boy was not in the least like him.

I arrived at the Sitwells in good time. The house was already full of guests and very soon I ran up against young Manners. He had a bright face, a refined, elegant appearance, and an affectionate manner.

"I am glad to see you," he said to me. "This is quite like old times. Where can we go to have a long chat?"

"You must come to my rooms for that, Granby. But here—this terrace is empty for a few moments. Come and stand under this awning and let me look at you."

We went out through an open window and stood on a beautiful terrace screened by an awning and decked with flowers.

"You do look quite a man, Granby," I said. "Why, you must be two-and-twenty. Your hands must be pretty full of business now, my boy, with that big estate, and you the sole person to look after it."

"The fact is, Hyne," he answered, "I am so harried and rushed about that I have hardly a minute to call my own. I want to come to see you, and will at any hour you like to appoint."

"Here are two chairs," I said, suddenly, for as he spoke I noticed the old nervous catch in his voice, and the quick movement of the head that spoke of a highly-strung system. "Sit down, won't you, Granby. You have a big story to tell me. Let's begin to hear it at once."

"Well," he answered, "there's a great deal to say. My father has left things involved, but, of course, they *may* come all right; I can't say. Sometimes I fear—sometimes I hope. Anyhow, I shall know soon. What day is this—the 18th. I shall know, I must know, before the 24th."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked in astonishment.

"I will tell you presently. I could not in this crowd."

He glanced nervously behind him.

"Come and dine with me to-morrow night," was my answer.

His face lit up with pleasure. He was about to reply in the affirmative when some people came on to the terrace. They were two girls, both handsome and total strangers to me. I saw, however, that Granby knew them. His face flushed with vivid colour, and his eyes grew dark with delight. He greeted both girls, and especially the slighter and smaller of the two, with effusion.

"This is good," he said; "I was just talking to a special friend of mine. May I introduce you?"

A moment later I was shaking the hand and looking into the face of the brightest and most capable girl probably in the whole of England. Her name was Angela Dickinson. She was the daughter of a well known barrister, who would undoubtedly be appointed to a judgeship before long. She had only lately come out—had met Manners when abroad. They were great chums. Oh yes, it was good to see him again. They smiled at each other, and young Manners and Miss

Angela Dickinson went off together, the other girl, whose name was Muriel, fell to my share to entertain.

"I am so glad we have met Mr. Manners and that he looks so well," she said. "When we saw him at Naples he often appeared very much troubled. I am glad he has met an old friend in you."

"Yes," I replied. "I have known Granby since he was a little boy. His mother was one of my best friends. Granby had a sad childhood; his father—I suppose everyone knows about him."

She nodded and looked grave.

"The man is dead," I continued. "Let his ashes rest in peace. It seems to me, Miss Dickinson, that Manners' only fault is that he is extremely sensitive."

"I know that," she replied. "Angela and he are great friends."

I followed the direction of her eyes. The pair were standing closely together at the further end of the balcony.

"There is not a doubt that they care for each other," said Miss Muriel, "but up to the present no word has been spoken—at least to my father. I wish he would speak—his silence puts Angela in a strained position."

Soon afterwards I took my leave, going home to attend to some special business which was occupying me that night. Just as I was going downstairs young Manners bounded after me.

"May I come to-night instead of to-morrow night?" he said. "It doesn't matter about dinner. I want to talk things over with you."

I told him to come in about nine o'clock, and he nodded his acceptance.

Punctually to the hour he arrived, looking handsome and gentlemanly in his evening clothes. I offered him a pipe: he sat down and we both smoked in silence for a minute or two.

"Well," I said, suddenly—for I saw that it must be my business to lead the way—"I felt rather anxious about you when we sat together in the balcony; but Miss Dickinson has relieved all my fears. You are all right, Manners. I congratulate you most heartily on your future."

He wrung my hand but did not speak.

"I suppose the engagement will soon be announced?" I said, after a pause.

"Oh, we are not engaged, at least, not exactly. I'd give the world if it could be,

but I don't see my way—there are difficulties, and monstrous ones. It is about those I want to talk to you."

"Well, speak up, old chap. I am interested in you from every point of view. Tell me everything and we will take counsel together."

He drew his chair close to mine.

"When were you last at Croftwood?" was his remark.

"Not for some years now—not since your mother's death. I grant that the old place is gloomy, but nevertheless I love it. In your hands it will assume a very different appearance. You can rebuild and redecorate. You can cut down sufficient timber to give the place more air, and not such a crowded-up appearance. Croftwood Hall will be, I am sure, a lovely place in your reign, Manners, and Miss Angela is the very girl to make you happy there."

"I love the place," he answered—"it has been in our family for hundreds of years. Nevertheless I dread it very much. I had a terrible fright there and have never been the same since. Did you hear of it?"

"No," I answered, puzzled at his tone.

"It happened a long time ago now, and it was on account of that I was sent abroad. My mother and father were away at the time—my mother was ordered to the sea for her health. You know, of course, that the old place is supposed to be haunted?"

"Most old places are," I answered in some heat. "But really, Manners, at this time of day to talk of haunted houses means nonsense. No old family seat is complete without its ghost. But what of that—no one really believes in the unearthly visitant."

"Some people do," he said with a shudder. "Well, let me tell you. My father and mother were both away—my mother wanted me to go to her, but my father refused. You know what a brute he was."

"Hush," I said, "he is dead."

"Dead or alive, I must speak the truth—he was a brute. I dreaded and hated him, but I worshipped my mother. I was terribly put out at being left behind. I was a big lad—fifteen at the time, but I cried myself ill. The house was horribly lonely, and there were only two servants—old Tarring, the butler, who is still there, and the cook. Half the rooms were shut up. The days were terrible and the long evenings were enough to turn one's brain. I had not even a book to read, for my father had locked up the library. I had not a friend to speak to,

there was not a young person anywhere within miles. My nervousness, always a big thing, got worse. I lost my sleep—I used to wander about the old house half the night. On one special night I was so bad that I could not eat any dinner, and afterwards I had a fit of shivering and fancied I saw things whenever I looked up. I rang for Tarring at last and begged of him, for God's sake, to keep me company. You know him, of course, a bent old party with a nose like a beak. He came up and looked into my face and said solemnly—

"'Master Granby, if this goes on you will be mad soon.'"

"What do you mean?" I asked looking at him with terror.

"'You have madness in your eyes, sir, and you inherit it—don't you forget that. There's that gentleman, your great-great-uncle, whose portrait is in the picture gallery. He died in Bedlam. You'd best go and look at his picture and be warned. A young gentleman like you ought to be happy. He should come to his meals with appetite and sleep sound o' nights. Take my advice, sir, think no more about nerves or fancies, or they will be your undoing.'"

"He went away, having positively refused to stay with me another moment, declaring that my face gave him the blues and that he preferred cook's company in the kitchen. I thought I would go to bed and drown my terrors in sleep. I covered myself well up with the bedclothes, but I could not rest. You remember the picture gallery at Croftwood, don't you, Hyne?"

"Perfectly well," I replied.

"It is on the ground floor, and occupies almost the whole west wing of the house. It communicates with the chapel at one end and with the dining-hall on the other. I lay with my eyes wide open, my heart beating like a hammer, and my thoughts full of my mad great-uncle. Suddenly I remembered that his name was also Granby Manners. I took an unhealthy desire to look at his face. It could not be combated. I got up, and candle in hand went down through the old house. At last I found myself in the picture gallery. You know those deep embrasures near the mullioned windows?"

I nodded.

"The picture was at the end close to the old chapel. Just as I got up to it, I saw someone standing behind me—someone in black—with a hood on. The whole thing was

over in a minute for I fainted away. But I remember now as distinctly as though it were only just happening, that the figure spoke and with outstretched hands pointed at me and said

doctor was summoned, and I was in bed in danger of brain fever for many weeks. My mother got better and returned home. When I saw her I told her exactly what had happened. She was full of sympathy and



"The figure with outstretched hands pointed at me and said—'Granby Manners, you will die in this room.'"

"'Granby Manners, you will die in this room.'"

"My screams must have brought old Tarring. I was taken to my bedroom, the

tenderness and love. She took immediate steps and I was sent abroad with a tutor. We went from one sunny land to another, and I began to forget my troubles and grew

strong and healthy once again. Then came the terrible news of my mother's death. I should never see my darling more. I was stricken to the earth—I resolved never to return to England. But two years after my father died, and the lawyers wrote and said that I must return home at once. I found the estate terribly involved, in short, the outlook is most gloomy."

"Have you told this strange story to Miss Dickinson?" I asked.

"I have. She knows everything. She knows that we cannot be engaged until things clear up a bit. If they never do, which is more than probable, I must give her up. Yes, I must, however hard it may be. As to the story of my mad ancestor, I do not think much about it. There has not been a second case of insanity in the family—so that goes for nothing; but I cannot ask Mr. Dickinson for Angela when I have no money to support her with."

"Surely that sounds ridiculous," I said. "You, as owner of Croftwood Hall, must have plenty of money."

"That is the point, Hyne," he replied. "The complications are enormous. I will come to that presently; but as we are talking of nerves and fancies, may I tell you something else? You have heard, of course, of the Croftwood Elm?"

I nodded. He was alluding to an enormous elm, of great age, which grew by itself just within sight of the house. There was a superstition in the old place that a branch from this elm always fell before the owner's death.

"I was at Croftwood last week," continued Granby. "The gardeners were clearing away the great branch which had fallen from the elm two days before my father's death."

"Well," I said, "you are not going to think anything of that. It was merely a coincidence. Gales of wind will break off the branches of old trees to the end of time. Come, Manners, I am ashamed that you should pin your faith to such rubbish. But tell me, when are you going to Croftwood again?"

"To-morrow."

"What 'To-morrow' May I come with you?"

"Would you come?"

His face lighted up with intense pleasure.

"That would be splendid," he said. "I can't tell you how I hate these visits. A great deal hangs on what takes place in the next

few days. Poltimore will be there. He is the horrible man to whom the estate is mortgaged."

"Croftwood Hall mortgaged?" I cried.

"Yes, and up to the hilt. I shall be awfully glad to tell you. Of course, what I say is in confidence. I don't want the whole world to know that I am a pauper."

"You cannot be that," I answered: "but anyhow, you can trust me."

"I will tell you everything to-morrow," was his answer.

He rose as he spoke, and soon afterwards took his leave.

According to my appointment, I met the lad at Waterloo the following day. We reached Croftwood soon after six o'clock. It was a lovely day, bright and not too warm, and as we drove through the park the old trees in their summer greenery restored many memories to my mind.

"Here we are," cried Granby, as the dog-cart put us down at the porch, where the old butler was waiting to receive us.

A more decrepit, bent old man I had never seen. His hooked nose, his distorted, claw-like hands, gave him the appearance more of a bird of ill-omen than anything else. As he glanced with a fixed and by no means amiable expression from Granby to myself, I observed that his eyes were keen, bright, and sharp as a needle. Whatever else had happened to old Tarring, his intellect was still well to the fore. Tarring knew me, although he pretended to regard me as a total stranger, and evidently viewed me with small favour.

"Are there no letters?" asked Manners.

"The post won't be in just yet, sir."

"Well, Tarring, Mr. Hyne has come to stay with me. See that you get a room ready for him. Now, Hyne, let us have a stroll before dinner. Doesn't the place look lovely just now? By the way, you never have met Mr. Poltimore. He was a great friend of my father's. I will tell you how my affairs stand before we see him."

We strolled off through one of the gardens.

"The situation is far worse than you have any idea of," he began. "I will endeavour to explain. No one knows exactly what my father's life was, but there is no doubt that on a certain night he got into a most terrible affair in London. Nobody knows what he did, but it was necessary for him to have twenty thousand pounds in cash that night. It was that or suicide. He obtained the

sum, how I don't know, from Mr. Poltimore, who is a rich jewel merchant in the city.

"In exchange for the money my father gave the man a document all duly attested and witnessed—a sort of mortgage on Croftwood. It is to this effect. That Mr. Poltimore holds the place as security for his money, and the mortgagee has to pay 10 per cent. on the loan. There are arrears of interest now amounting to ten thousand pounds. This sum has to be paid on Midsummer day, or, according to the mortgage, Mr. Poltimore seizes the property, which is worth not less than a hundred thousand pounds. But there is another and more terrible clause. It is this: even if the interest is paid regularly, I shall only have the place for my life, after that it passes altogether into Poltimore's hands, or into the hands of his heirs. If the arrears of interest can be paid by Midsummer day all will be well as far as I am concerned, but no child of mine can ever inherit the place. You must see for yourself that under such conditions I can't ask Angela Dickinson to be my wife."

"I am not surprised," I answered. "But have you no reasonable hope that your lawyers will raise the money?"

"They say they will do their best. But it is by no means easy."

"Suppose they fail—have you no other means of getting the money?"

"No," he answered. "I once purchased some shares in a gold mine, and I think they will, in time, bring me in a lot of money, but of course it is all a speculation, and I don't suppose anyone would lend on the chance."

"I see," I replied. "And of course it is very much to Mr. Poltimore's advantage that you should not pay the interest on Midsummer day, for he would then have a place worth one hundred thousand pounds for twenty thousand."

"Quite so," was his reply.

Our stroll had led us by this time to the old elm tree.

"Ah," cried Manners, "look for yourself. Here is the place where the branch fell before my father's death."

We struck off across the grass towards the gnarled old tree.

"I thought they had cleared it away before now, but it is still there. How odd."

We were standing exactly under the tree, and a big branch, looking very fresh and green, lay beneath it at our feet. Granby's face turned white.

"Another branch," he cried. "What does this mean?"

"Nothing, except a fresh gale," was my answer.

"You don't understand," he replied, impatiently. "A branch of the old elm always falls before the death of the owner. I am the present owner. What does this allude to?"

"Come away, and don't be nonsensical," were the words which crowded to my lips, but before I could utter them a bass voice, loud and ringing, sounded through the trees.

"Hullo!" it called.

I glanced up with relief at the interruption, and saw a tall, heavily built man in corduroys approaching us rapidly.

"Hullo, Granby," he cried. "Just come down, eh? How seedy you look—white as a turnip. What's the matter?"

"Nothing, thanks. Let me introduce you to my friend, Mr. Laurence Hyne, Mr. Poltimore."

Poltimore raised his hat. I thought I had never seen a more disagreeable face. He eyed me with small favour and turned again to the boy.

"Is your friend coming to stay?" he asked somewhat pointedly.

"Certainly. As my guest," said Granby, in a low tone.

Poltimore uttered a mocking laugh.

"Your guest, forsooth," he said. "By the way, have you had that letter?"

"No, but it may come by this evening's post."

"You will be out of suspense at least, after you have heard," said Poltimore.

He glanced round with a frown at me, and we turned towards the house. As we entered it, Tarring approached and handed Manners a letter in a blue envelope.

"Ah, here it is," he cried.

He turned aside to open it, his fingers shaking. Poltimore watched him with intense excitement.

"Well," he said impatiently, "what is the news?"

"Good news for you, Mr. Poltimore," said Granby then. "There need be no secret," he continued, and he glanced from me to the other man. "The loan cannot be raised, therefore, in four days this house is yours."

Poltimore raised his hand as I brought it down again with great force on his thigh.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," he said. "Upon my soul, I am sorry for you, lad, but I can't pretend that I'm not pleased on my own account at the turn events are taking. No offence to you, Mr Hyne, but when the property comes

Manners turned to me "Isn't he a brute?" he said. "But for my sake you will try to endure him, Hyne."

"My dear lad, Poltimore is nothing to me, nothing whatever, except as far as you are concerned. But show me that letter



"No offence to you Mr Hyne, but when the property comes into my hands I choose my own guests."

into my hands I choose my own guests. You understand, sir. Now I am off to the village. Don't wait dinner for me."

He went away with a great stride, banging the heavy oak door after him.

I don't believe that the worst can have happened."

"But it has," he answered, and he handed me the letter, the contents of which had so elated Mr. Poltimore

I read it ; it ran as follows :—

DEAR SIR,—We regret to inform you that we cannot raise the money. The shares in the mine you hold are of no value as security. The estate will therefore pass to Mr. Poltimore on Midsummer day.

"But surely," I cried, "it would be possible to find twenty thousand pounds in order to let you keep the property. To tell you the truth, Manners, I don't believe in that extraordinary document your father signed. At least, I should like to have a good look at it. The estate is entailed."

"Yes ; but he broke the entail."

"How so ? How is that possible ? He could not do it without your permission, and you were not of age."

"He sent me a paper to sign on my twenty-first birthday. I never even guessed what it was, and signed practically without reading, but now I am certain it was that, and I signed away my birthright."

I could not help feeling a sense of dismay. Manners had no more notion of business than an infant.

I thought hard during the remainder of that evening, and at last it suddenly occurred to me to consult no less a man than Mr. Dickinson, the father of Miss Angela. I determined to tell Granby of my resolution.

"You shan't want a friend at this juncture," I said. "If I had the money I would lend it to you with a heart and a half, and think myself well off, too," I added, "for Croftwood Hall is admirable security for any loan. But I have nothing like that amount at my command, so there is no good wasting time over that thought. The place, however, is worth saving, even if you had nothing to do with it. We don't want an old family place to get into the hands of a scoundrel of Poltimore's sort. Now I propose to go to London to-morrow, for there is, as you are aware, not a moment to lose, and when there I shall consult Dickinson."

"What ?" cried Granby. "Angela's father ?"

"The same."

He looked uncomfortable, started up and began to pace the room. "You—would not surely tell him—about——?"

"You must leave that to me, my boy. Whatever happens, I must have an open hand. You cannot be worse off than you are now, and it would be impossible for Dickinson to despise you for loving his daughter."

The poor fellow covered his face with his hands and groaned.

"I am off in the morning to do what I can," I said. "In the meantime, stay here and await events."

I was sorry afterwards that I had not insisted on taking him with me : but how could I foretell the horrible future.

I reached home soon after eleven o'clock, and telephoned immediately to Dickinson to know if he could see me. I had a reply in the affirmative, and went to his chambers soon after noon.

"Come out and have lunch with me," he said heartily, "and then you can tell me what it is all about. Young Manners and the Croftwood estate ! But surely that is a fine property ?"

"It is if we can rescue it," I replied, "and it is for that purpose I want to consult you."

We lunched in his favourite coffee house off the Strand, and I told Dickinson as much as I thought necessary of the story. He was a middle-aged man, with a staid, reserved face. It was difficult to understand how he could be the sparkling and vivacious Angela's father. He sat quietly after my communication had come to an end, then he said abruptly—

"Have you told me everything ?"

I looked at him and resolved to trust him.

"There is one thing I have left out," I said. "It is this. Young Manners loves your youngest daughter as faithfully and truly as a man can love a woman. He would make her a good husband, and Croftwood is not to be despised."

"That is true," answered Dickinson. "I don't know what can be done, but I will consult my solicitor. If anyone can help you, Wantage is the man. Stay, I will give you a letter to take to him at once. You can explain matters more quickly than I could, and there isn't a moment to lose."

"The worst happens on Midsummer day, and this is the 20th. We have only four days."

He gave a low, significant whistle, then dashed off a few words to Wantage and put the letter into my hands.

Wantage was busy in his office in Lincoln's Inn. He was a little red-headed, freckled, elderly man, with a keen face, an observant eye and a manner which expressed nothing. He was very busy, as numerous clerks testified, but Dickinson's letter was *Open Sesame*, and I was allowed to see him almost immediately.

"A curious case," he said, after we had

talked for over an hour. "Will you kindly leave me now, Mr. Hyne, and come back about this time to-morrow. I can give you my answer then—yes or no."

There was nothing for it but to comply. I spent the evening at my club, slept as best I could during the night that followed, and punctually to the moment was back with Wantage in the afternoon of the twenty-first. I was taken at once into his presence. He shut the door and locked it.

"I have not been idle since I saw you," he said to me. "I have been making enquiries with regard to those gold reefs. I have also heard several things by no means to Poltimore's credit. I do not believe that at the worst he can uphold his claim. It is my very firm impression that the law wants him, and sooner than he has any idea of. At any rate, one thing must be done—the cheque must be paid. I will let you have the amount. I heard, on the whole, favourable accounts with regard to those gold reefs. Croftwood is worth saving, the young man is worth rescuing. Now, if you will help me, the thing can be done."

"No fear of my not helping you," I answered cheerfully. "I would almost cut off my right hand to help that boy."

"Thanks, Mr. Hyne," he said, gazing at me critically and almost with a quizzical expression. "You are a good friend."

"His mother was a good friend to me."

"Ah, I respect you, Mr. Hyne. Well, this is your part in the matter. The cheque must be paid to you, and you must pay it to Poltimore. The lad himself must have nothing to do with it. You must accept Poltimore's letter of release. This is a matter for a lawyer, however, and if you are going down to Croftwood to-morrow I shall have pleasure in accompanying you. Poltimore may play tricks with Manners, and possibly also with you; but I do not think he will dare to try them on with me. Will you be ready to accompany me to Croftwood Hall to-morrow?"

"Certainly," I said.

We talked a little longer; matters were finally arranged, and I left in high spirits.

On my way home it occurred to me that I would wire to Granby.

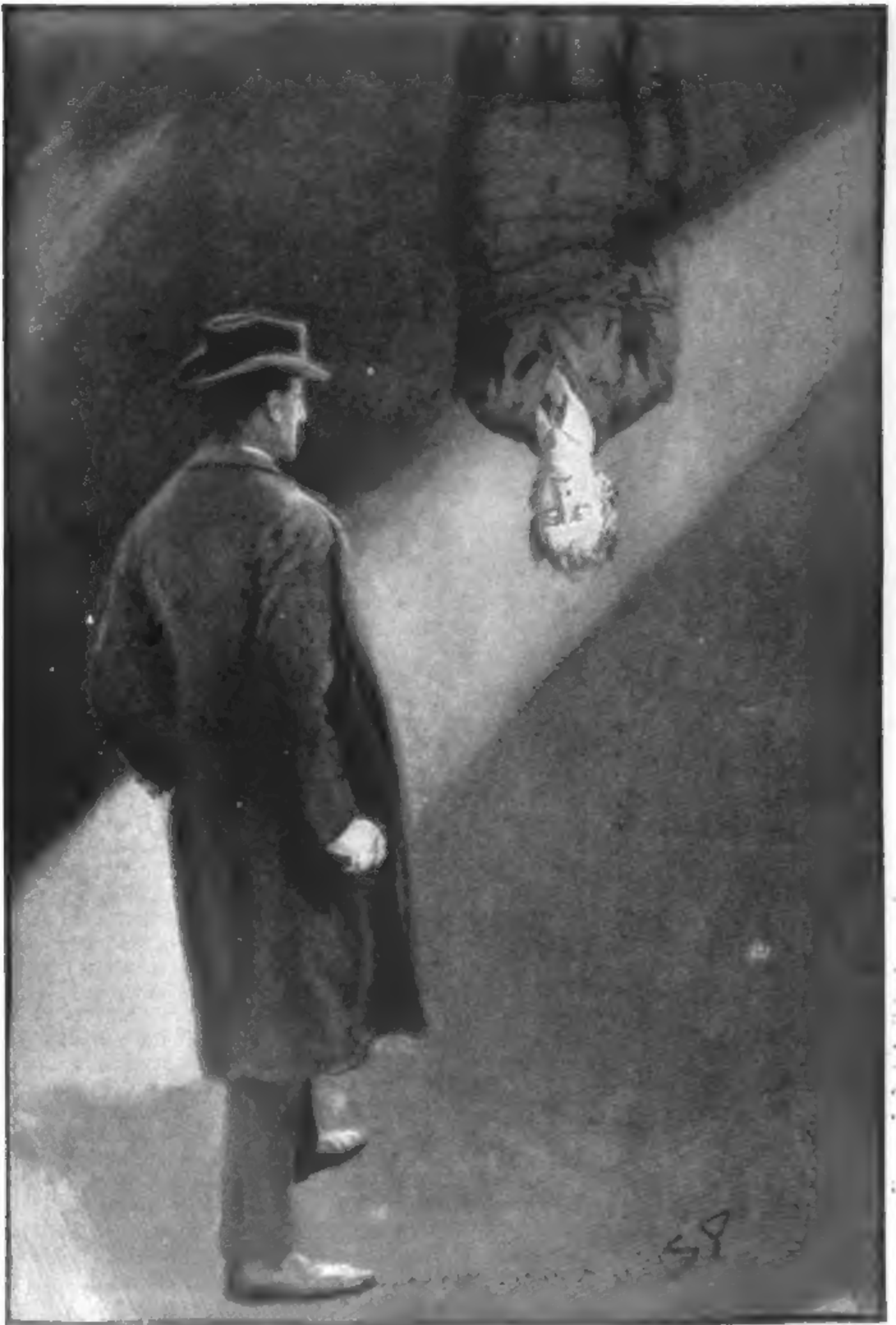
I accordingly sent the following very cheerful message:—

All right. Money will be raised. Coming down with solicitor to-morrow. Cheer up.—LAURENCE HYNE.

The rest of the day passed as usual. It was not until nine o'clock, just after I had returned from dining at my club, that all of a sudden it flashed upon me what a deadly and dangerous thing I had done in sending that wire to Granby. I sprang from my chair. Manners would, of course, tell Poltimore, and the man would be beside himself with rage and disappointment. Beyond doubt, Poltimore was in a most serious position; his own affairs were so critical that if he did not get relief soon, such as the Croftwood estate would furnish him with, he would go under, how deeply and how far I could not guess; but he would be submerged—ruined. As far as he was concerned, everything depended on whether young Manners was able to pay him by Midsummer day, or—great heavens! there was another alternative. Should Granby Manners *die* before Midsummer day, Poltimore would be equally safe—indeed, more safe than if the arrears of interest were paid. Then, beyond doubt, the estate would be his. He would be a rich man. Should Granby die Poltimore would have attained the utmost height of his ambition. The position was too fearful to contemplate quietly. I, who had hoped to liberate the boy from all his troubles, had, by sending that telegram, in all possibility sealed his death warrant. A desperate and cruel man with no principle would do anything. Then there was that scoundrelly butler, a coward without a scrap of conscience. He had always hated the boy. I saw hatred in his eyes when he greeted us both at Croftwood Hall. Yes, beyond doubt Manners was in the gravest danger.

It was impossible for me to rest. Late as it was, I found myself ten minutes afterwards in a hansom cab. I had determined to catch the ten o'clock train from Waterloo. Not an instant's delay must keep me from the place. I would wire to Wantage in the morning. He could come down and the necessary business could be transacted. But I, in the meantime, would be on the spot to prevent mischief.

I am not given to nervous fancies, but I must confess that during that railway journey to Croftwood station I had about as bad a time as a man often lives through. There was the lonely deserted house, steeped in all its superstitions; there was the supposed ghost; there was the villain who would stop at nothing; there was his tool, the old butler; and there was the boy himself, nervous, highly strung, innocent.



My heart almost stopped, for, brought into relief by a long ray of moonlight, was a face—*upside down*.

The train seemed to crawl—it stopped at every station. By the time I reached Croftwood station it was nearly one o'clock. There was no fly to be had—there was nothing for it but to finish my journey on foot. I knew my way well, and struck off along the country lanes at a brisk pace. The night was fine with a high wind. Scuds of broken cloud raced across the moon, giving alternate moments of bright light followed by darkness.

At last I turned up the avenue and finally reached the house. There was no light in any of the windows. I determined not to ring the bell, but to make my way round to the left under some close-growing shrubberies. I thought it extremely probable that I could enter by the old chapel, a place no longer used either for prayer or praise. No one would think of the chapel, or be concerned as to whether the heavy oak door was locked or not. I had observed that it was unlocked when with Granby two days ago. Now it yielded to my pressure. I went straight through the chapel. This led me into the picture gallery, at the further end of which was a secret door by which I could eventually reach Granby's room.

As I walked quickly down the long picture gallery, the greater part of which was in intense darkness, the windows having been all barred and bolted, I suddenly paused and listened. Something had broken the silence. What could it be? It sounded like low guttural breathing. My heart beat fast as I advanced, then it almost stopped, for hanging unsupported, and brought into relief by a long ray of moonlight which fell through a badly-fitting shutter, was a face within a few feet of my own. Oh God!—the face was *upside down*, while breath passed quickly between the anguished lips. It was the face of Granby.

This scene lasted for only a minute; before I could speak everything was changed—a bright light flooded the apartment, and Poltimore, a candle in his hand, approached from the dining hall end. Granby was hanging by his feet. I rushed at the villain—a desperate encounter took place.

"What is this, you scoundrel?" I shouted.

He swung me off with the strength of a man nearly double my size, pushed the old butler towards me and dashed away. The latter I seized.

"Help me at once, Tarring," I cried, "or I'll wring your neck. Save Mr. Granby—what are you about man? Be quick."

His face was ghastly, but he spoke no word. We worked quietly. A step-ladder stood behind us and a few moments later Manners lay upon the floor, still breathing, but unconscious.

"Go and fetch brandy," I cried.

The man disappeared and soon returned with a decanter and a glass. I poured a little down the boy's throat, and he opened his eyes.

A few hours later Granby was able to tell his own story.

"I got your telegram, and was nearly mad with joy," he said. "Poltimore found me holding it in my hand. He rushed at me, seized the sheet and read the news. I shall never forget his face. It was just as though I were in Hades, and saw the face of a lost spirit. But before I had time to realise anything he had caught me in his powerful grip. He said something to Tarring who was not far off and they carried me away with them to the picture gallery. I think I fainted, for when I came to myself I was tied by the ankles to that beam. What I lived through during the next awful hours I can never by any possibility explain."

The doctor when he arrived made it clear that death must have ensued in a very short time. This would have been caused by the enormous congestion of the brain. The cunningness of the mode of murder was made apparent when the doctor further said that after the boy died and the body was lowered down, there would not be the slightest trace apparent to anyone of what had happened.

Both Poltimore and Tarring were arrested, and are now undergoing a term of penal servitude.

As to Granby, his friends clustered round him, and the estate was put on a firm basis. He is about to marry Angela Dickinson in a short time. The shares in the gold reef have also turned out trumps, and the owner of Croftwood Hall will once more be a very rich man.

In the bright, calm, handsome fellow, who shows not a trace of fear or nervousness, who is happy of the happy, and gay of the gay, few would recognise the boy whom I was the means of rescuing from the most terrible death.